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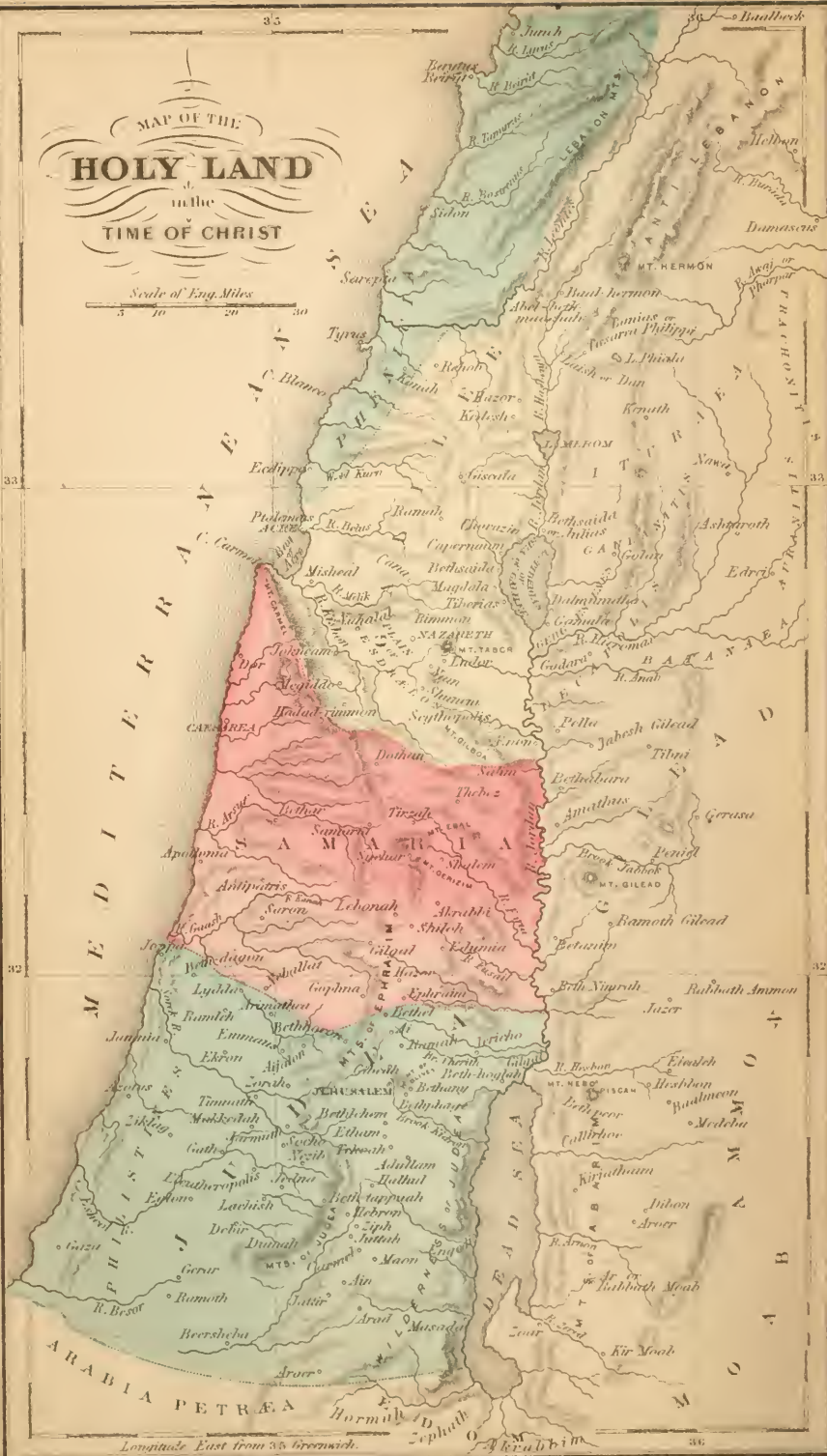


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# MAP OF THE HOLY LAND in the TIME OF CHRIST

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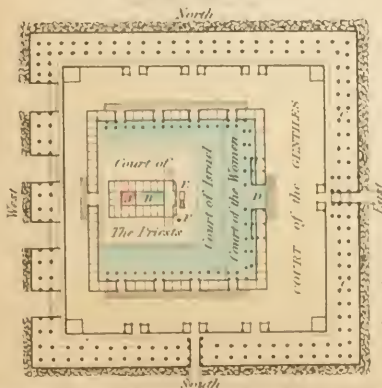
in the time of Christ.

built by David, &c.  
built by Herod, &c.  
built by Herod Agrippa, A.D. 45.



## PLAN OF THE TEMPLE

in the time of Christ.



- A. The Holy of Holies
- B. The Holy Place
- C. Solomon's Porch
- D. The Gate Beautiful
- E. Altar of Burnt Offering
- F. The Brazen Laver



PLAN OF  
THE TABERNACLE

DR A.E.M. POADY  
1877

THE  
LIFE OF CHRIST.

BY

REV. WILLIAM HANNA, D.D. LL.D.,  
EDINBURGH,

AUTHOR OF THE LIFE OF REV. DR. CHALMERS.

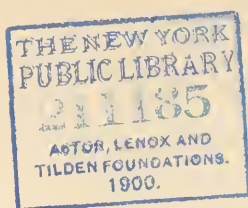
WRITTEN AFTER DR. HANNA'S OWN PERSONAL VISIT TO PALESTINE.



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1870-2





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## PREFACE.\*

[PREFIXED TO "THE FORTY DAYS AFTER OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION," WHICH WAS ISSUED NEXT AFTER "THE LAST DAY OF OUR LORD'S PASSION," THE PART OF THE LIFE FIRST PUBLISHED.]

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I HAVE long had the conviction that the results of that fuller and more exact interpretation of the books of the New Testament to which biblical scholars have been conducted, might be made available for framing such a continuous and expanded narrative of the leading incidents in our Redeemer's life as would be profitable for practical and devotional, rather than for doctrinal or controversial purposes. It was chiefly to try whether I could succeed in realizing the conception I had formed of what such a narrative might be made, that the volume on the *Last Day of our Lord's Passion* was published. The favorable reception which it met has induced me to issue a companion volume on the succeeding and closing period of our Lord's life on earth. Should this meet with anything like equal favor; I shall be encouraged to prosecute the task of completing the narrative in a similar form.

To one who previously had doubts of the historic truth of the entire gospel narrative, a personal inspection of the localities in which the events are represented as having occurred, must have a peculiar interest and value. It was in such a state of mind, half inclined to

\* By means of the best critical helps, the writer was, in the first instance, at pains to read aright and harmonize the accounts given by the different evangelists. Out of them he has endeavored to construct a continuous and expanded narrative, intended to bring out, as vividly as possible, not only the sequence of the incidents, but the characters, motives, and feelings of the different actors and spectators in the events described. He has refrained from all critical or doctrinal discussions as alien from the object he had in view; nor has he thought it necessary to burden the following pages with references to all the authorities consulted. The English reader will find in the writings of Alford, Stier, or Elliott, the warrant for most of those readings of the original and inspired records upon which the following narrative is based. [From the part first issued. May 3 1872.]

believe that the whole story of the gospel was legendary, that M. Renan visited the Holy Land three years ago. He has told us the result. "All that history," he says, "which at a distance seemed to float in the clouds of an unreal world took instantly a body, a solidity, which astonished me. The striking accord between the texts and the places, the marvellous harmony of the evangelical picture with the country which served as its frame, were to me as a revelation. I had before my eyes a fifth gospel, mutilated but still legible; and ever afterwards in the recitals of Matthew and Mark, instead of an abstract Being that one would say had never existed, I saw a wonderful human figure live and move." In listening to this striking testimony as to the effect of his visit to the East, we have deeply to regret that with M. Renan the movement from incredulity towards belief stopped at its first stage.

Besides its use in cases like that of Renan, in removing preëxisting doubts, a journey through Palestine is of the greatest service in giving a certain freshness and vividness to one's conceptions of the incidents described by the evangelists, which nothing else can impart. Its benefits in this respect it would be difficult to exaggerate. But if any one go to the Holy Land full of the expectation of gazing on spots, or limited localities, once hallowed by the Redeemer's presence, and closely linked with some great event in his history; or if he go, cherishing the idea that a study of the topography will throw fresh light upon some of the obscurer portions of the gospel record, he will be doomed, I apprehend, to disappointment. I had the strongest possible desire to plant my foot upon some portion of the soil of Palestine, on which I could be sure that Jesus once had stood. I searched diligently for such a place, but it was not to be found. Walking to and fro, between Jerusalem and Bethany, you have the feeling—one that no other walks in the world can raise—that He often traversed one or other of the roads leading out to the village. But when you ask where, along any one of them, is a spot of which you can be certain that Jesus once stood there, you cannot find it. The nearest approach you can make to the identification of any such spot, is at the point where the lower road curves round the shoulder of Mount Olivet, the point from which the first view of Jerusalem would be got by one entering the city by this route. It is here that Dr. Stanley supposes Jesus to have paused and beheld the city, and



to have wept over it. There is every likelihood that his supposition is correct; and it was with his description fresh in the memory, that more than once I visited the memorable spot. I found, however, that the best topographer of Jerusalem and its neighborhood, whom I had the fortune to meet there—one who had studied the subject for years—was strongly inclined to the belief that it was along the higher and not the lower road that the triumphal procession passed; and that it was on his reaching the summit of Mount Olivet, that the city burst upon the Saviour's view. It did not alter my own conviction that Dr. Stanley was correct; but it hindered, indeed destroyed the impression which absolute certainty would have produced.

There is indeed one circle of limited diameter, I believe but one, that you can trace on the soil of Palestine, and be absolutely certain that Jesus once stood within its circumference—that which you may draw round Jacob's well near Sychar. I had determined to tread that circle round and round; to sit here and there and everywhere about, so as to gratify a long-cherished wish. How bitter the disappointment on reaching it to find no open space at the well-mouth; but, spread all round, the remains of an old building, over whose ruinous walls we had to scramble and slide down, through heaps of stones and rubbish, till through two or three small apertures we looked down into the undiscoverable well!

It would seem indeed that, Jacob's well excepted, there is not a definite locality in Palestine that you can certainly and intimately connect with the presence of Jesus Christ. The grotto shown at Bethlehem may have been the stable of the village inn, but who can now assure us of the fact? It is impossible to determine the site of that house in Nazareth under whose roof, for thirty years, Jesus lived. Of Capernaum, the city in which most of his wonderful works were wrought, scarcely a vestige remains. Travellers and scholars are disputing which is Capernaum among various obscure heaps of ruins on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee. No one, I believe, can tell the exact place where any one of our Lord's miracles was wrought, or any one of his parables was spoken. The topographical obscurity that hangs around the history of Jesus, reaches its climax at Jerusalem. Bethany is sure, but the house of Lazarus is a fable. The Mount of Olives remains, but it cannot have been where they show it, so near the city, that the real Gethsemane lay. You cannot

err as to the ridge on which of old the temple stood, but where were the courts around it, in which Jesus so often taught; where the palace of the high priest, the hall of Pilate, the ground on which the cross stood, the new sepulchre in which they laid his body? Whenever you try to get at some fixed and limited locality, it eludes your search. All is obscurity; either utterly unknown, or covered with a thickening cloud of controversy. May it not have been meant that the natural, but in this case too human curiosity that we cherish, should be baffled? Is it not better that he should have passed away, leaving so little of minute local association connected with his presence in the midst of us? Does it not seem more in accordance with the dignity of his divine character, that of all the lives that were ever lived on earth, his should be the one that it is least possible to degrade by rude familiarities of conception; his the name which it is least possible to mix up with that superstition which ever seeks an earthly shrine at which to offer its incense?

It is true that tradition has fixed on many holy places in Palestine, and that each year sends crowds of worshippers to these shrines; but as the darkness of those ages in which these traditions arose is giving place to light, the faith in many of these holy places cannot stand against the gathering force of evidence. The time must come, however long it be in arriving, when what is doubtful and what is sure shall be clearly known; and if then, still more than now, it shall appear that the most wonderful of all earthly lives has left the fewest visible marks of itself behind in recognisable localities, it will also, perhaps, be believed that this is so, not without a purpose, but that it should be manifest that the ties of Jesus of Nazareth were not with places, but with persons; the story of his life one easily and equally understood in all ages and in every land.

It was while the sheets of this volume were passing through the press, that the *Vie de Jesus* came into the writer's hands. I need not say with what lively interest I turned to that part of it in which the period of our Saviour's life of which this volume treats should have been represented. I found an utter blank. "For the historian," says M. Renan, "the life of Jesus terminates with his last breath." It would perhaps scarcely be fair to call this a verdict against evidence, as M. Renan has told us that in a future volume he will explain to us how the legend of the resurrection arose. We must be permitted,



however, even in absence of such explanation, to express our strong conviction of the unreasonableness of that procedure which assumes that what are good and sufficient materials for history up to the death of Jesus, are utterly useless afterwards. Admitting for the moment that the resurrection, as a miraculous event, did not and could not happen, the seeing and conversing with Jesus was surely a thing as much within the power of human testimony to establish at one time as at another. And if those witnesses are to be credited, as M. Renan admits they are, who tell us of seeing and hearing him before the crucifixion, why are the same witnesses to be discredited when they tell us of seeing and hearing him after that event? If the mixture of miracle with recorded incident throws the later period out of the historian's pale, should it not have done the same with the earlier period also?

This however is not the place to enter upon any of those momentous topics which M. Renan has brought up afresh for discussion. There are different modes in which his *Life of Jesus* may be met and answered. One is a full and critical exposure of all the arbitrary assumptions and denials, affirmations without proofs, doubts without reasons, inconsistencies and contradictions, errors historical and exegetical, which are to be met with throughout the volume. Renan's own range of scholarship is so extensive, and he has derived his materials from so many sources, that we trust no incompetent hand will rashly undertake the critical dissection of his book. A simpler, more direct, and more effective method of dealing with this work, would be to expose its flagrant failure in what may be regarded as its capital design and object: to eliminate all that is superhuman and divine from the character and life of Christ, and yet leave him a man of such pure, exalted, unrivalled virtue, as to be worthy of the unreserved and unbounded love and reverence of mankind. Let the fancy sketch of Jesus of Nazareth, which M. Renan has presented to us, be stripped of that rich coloring which he has thrown around it, and it will appear as that of a man who at times showed himself to be ignorant, weak, prejudiced, extravagant, fanatical; who in his teaching advanced sometimes what was foolish, sometimes what was positively immoral; who in his practice, was often himself misled, and became at least an accomplice in misleading and deceiving others. It is such a man whom he holds forth to us, and would have us venerate as the author of the Christian

faith. Here in this latest assault upon the divinity of Christ, we have it set before us what kind of human character is left to Him if his Sonship to God be denied. It is a singular result of this attempt to strip Christ of all divine qualities and perfections, that it mars and mutilates his character even as a man. The two elements—the human, the divine—are so inseparably interwoven, that you cannot take away the one and leave the other unimpaired. If Jesus be not one with the Father in the possession of divine attributes, he can no longer be regarded as the type and model of a perfect humanity. A curious inquiry thus suggests itself into the modifications to which the humanity was subjected by its alliance with divinity in the complex character of the Redeemer, and into the manner in which the natural and the supernatural were woven together in his earthly history.

But without any controversial treatment, the evil which M. Renan's work is fitted to produce may be neutralized by a simple recital of the Life of Jesus, so as to show that the blending of the natural with the miraculous, the human with the divine, is essential to the coherence and consistency of the record—absolutely precluding such a conception of Christ's character as that which M. Renan has presented—that the fabric of the gospel history is so constructed that if you take out of it the divinity of Jesus, the whole edifice falls into ruins. The writer ventures to hope that such a Life of Jesus as he meditates may at least partially serve this purpose, and be useful in promoting an intelligent and devout faith in Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Mary, as the Son of God, the Saviour of mankind.

W. HANNA.

EDINBURGH, Nov. 11, 1863.

\* \* The Appendixes added to the last two parts of the Life have been omitted, and slight retrenchments made in the chapter on our Lord's baptism.

# THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

---

## THE EARLIER YEARS OF OUR LORD'S LIFE ON EARTH.

---

### I.

#### THE ANNUNCIATION—MARY AND ELISABETH.\*

“IN the sixth month”—half a year from the time when, within the holy place at Jerusalem, he had stood on the right side of the altar of incense, and announced to the incredulous Zacharias the birth of the Baptist—the angel Gabriel was sent to an obscure Galilean village to announce a still greater birth—that of the Divine Redeemer of mankind. As we open, then, the first page in the history of our Lord’s earthly life, we come at once into contact with the supernatural. The spirit-world unfolds itself; some of its highest inhabitants become palpable to sense, and are seen to take part in human affairs. In the old patriarchal and prophetic ages angels frequently appeared, conversing with Abraham and Hagar, and Lot and Jacob; instructing in their ignorance, or comforting in their distress, or strengthening in their weakness, Joshua and Gideon, and Elijah and Daniel and Zechariah. Excluding, however, those instances in which it was the Angel of the Covenant who appeared, the cases of angelic manifestation were comparatively rare, and lie very thinly scattered over the four thousand years which preceded the birth of Christ. Within the half century that embraced this life we have more instances of angelic interposition than in all the foregoing centuries of the world’s history. At its opening and at its close angels appear as taking a special interest in events which had little of outward mark to distinguish

them. Gabriel announces to Zacharias the birth of John, to Mary the birth of Jesus. An angel warns Joseph in a dream to take the young child down to Egypt. On the night of the great birth, and for the first time on earth, a multitude of the heavenly host is seen. In the garden of Gethsemane, an angel comes to strengthen our Lord in his great agony. On the morning of the resurrection, angels appear, now sitting, now standing, within and without the sepulchre, as if they thronged around the place where the body of the Lord had lain. When from the top of Olivet the cloud carried the rising Jesus out of the apostles' sight, two angels stand beside the apostles as they gaze so steadfastly up into the heavens, and foretell his second coming. Nor do they withdraw from human sight when the ministry of our Lord has closed. Mingling with the other miraculous agency whereby the kingdom of Christ was established and extended, theirs appears. An angel releases Peter, commissions Philip, instructs Cornelius, smites Herod, stands amid the terrors of the shipwreck before Paul.

Is there aught incredible in this? If there be indeed a world of spirits, and in that world Christ fills the place our faith attributes to him; if in that world there be an innumerable company of angels; if the great design of our Lord's visit to this earth was to redeem our sinful race to God, and unite us with the unfallen members of his great family, then it was not unnatural that those who had worshipped around his throne should bend in wonder over his cradle, stand by his side in his deep agony, roll away the stone rejoicing from his sepulchre, and attend him as the everlasting doors were lifted up, when, triumphant over death and hell, he resumed his place in the eternal throne. When the Father brought his First-begotten into the world, the edict was, "Let all the angels of God worship him." Shall we wonder, then, that this worship, in one or two of its acts, should be made manifest to human vision, as if to tell us what an interest the incarnation excited, if not in the minds of men, in another and higher branch of the great community of spirits? From the beginning angels were interested spectators of what transpired on earth. When under the moulding hand of the Great Creator the present economy of material things was spread forth—so good, so beautiful—they sang together, they shouted for joy. When sin and death made their dark entrance, angels stood by, hailing the first beams of light that fell upon the darkness, welcoming the first human spirit that made its way into the heavenly mansions. The slow development of the divine purposes of mercy in the history of human redemption, they watched with eager eye. Still closer to our earth they gathered,



still more earnest was their gaze as the Son of the Eternal prepared to leave the glory he had with the Father, that he might come down and tabernacle as a man among us. And when the great event of his incarnation at last took place, it looked for a short season as if they were to mingle visibly in the affairs of men, and of that new kingdom which the Ancient of Days set up. It was the Son of God who brought these good angels down along with him. He has mediated not only between us and the Father, but between us and that elder branch of the great commonwealth of spirits, securing their services for us here, preparing us for their society hereafter. He has taught them to see in us that seed out of which the places left vacant by the first revolt in heaven are to be filled. He has taught us to see in them our elder brethren, to a closer and eternal fellowship with whom we are hereafter to be elevated. Already the interchange of kindly offices has commenced. Though since he himself has gone they have withdrawn from human vision, they have not withdrawn from earthly service under the Redeemer. Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation? Who shall recount to us wherein that gracious ministry of theirs consists; who shall prove it to be a fancy, that as they waited to bear away the spirit of Lazarus to Abraham's bosom, they hover round the death-bed of the believer still, the tread of their footstep, the stroke of their wing unheard as they waft the departing spirit to its eternal home?

"The angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man, whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary." Little information is given in the gospels as to the previous history either of Joseph or Mary. He, we are told, was of the house of David, of royal lineage by direct descent; but that line now fallen so low that he was but a village mechanic, a carpenter. Mary too, we have reason to believe, was also of the royal stock of David; yet in so humble a condition of life as made it natural that she should be betrothed to Joseph. This betrothal had taken place, and the new hopes it had excited agitate the youthful Mary's heart. She is alone in her dwelling, when, lifting up her eyes, she sees the form of the angel, and hears his voice say unto her: "Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." To Zacharias he had spoken at once by name, and had proceeded without prelude to deliver the message with which he had been charged. He enters more reverently this humble abode at Nazareth than he had entered the holy place of the great temple at Jerusalem. He stands

more reverently before this youthful maiden than before the aged priest. He cannot open to her his message till he has offered her such homage as heavenly messenger never paid to any member of our race. Is it any wonder that saluted so by one who, wearing, as in all likelihood he did, our human form, was yet like no man she had ever seen, Mary should have been "troubled at his saying;" troubled as she felt the privacy of her seclusion thus invaded, and looked upon that strange, unearthly, yet most attractive form which stood before her? She is not so troubled however as to hinder her from casting in her thoughts "what manner of salutation this should be." She receives the salutation in silence, with surprise, with awe, with thoughtful wonder. In sympathy with feelings depicted in her alarmed yet inquiring countenance, Gabriel hastens to relieve her fears and satisfy her curiosity. "Fear not," he says, after a brief pause. "Fear not, Mary;" the very familiar mention of her name carrying with it an antidote against alarm. "Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

There was scarce a woman in Israel, in those days, who did not cherish it as the very highest object of desire and ambition to be the mother of the promised Messiah. Mary was a woman in Judah, and the man to whom she was betrothed belonged also to that stock from which the Messiah was to spring. Perhaps the hope had already dawned that this great honor might be in store for her. Her devout and thoughtful habits had made her familiar with the old prophecies that foretold the Messiah's advent, and with the manner in which his kingdom was there spoken of. Obscure and mysterious as much of what Gabriel said may have appeared to her, she seems at once to have apprehended that it was of the birth of this great Son of David that he was speaking. She does not ask, she seems not to have needed any information on that point. Nor does she hesitate to accept as true all that Gabriel had declared. She puts indeed a question which, if its meaning had not been interpreted by the manner in which Gabriel dealt with it, and by the subsequent conduct of Mary herself, we might have regarded as akin to that of Zacharias; as indicating that she too had given way to incredulity. But hers was a question of curiosity not of unbelief; a question akin, not to the one which Zacharias put about the birth of John, but to that of

Abraham about the birth of Isaac, when he said to the angel, "Whereby shall I know this?" a question implying no failure of faith, for we know that Abraham staggered not at the promise through unbelief, but expressive simply of a desire for further information, for some sign in confirmation of his faith. He got such a sign and rejoiced. And so with Mary: her question, like the patriarch's, springing not from the spirit of a hesitating unbelief, but from natural curiosity, and the wish to have the faith she felt confirmed. Her desire was granted. She was told that the Holy Ghost should come upon her, that the power of the Highest should overshadow her, that the child afterwards to be born was now miraculously to be conceived. And as a sign, this piece of information, new to her we may believe, was given, that her relative, the aged Elisabeth, was also to have a son. Her question having been answered, and the manner of the great event so far revealed as to throw her back simply on the promise and power of God, Mary says: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." What a contrast here between Zacharias and Mary! The aged priest had been taught from childhood in one of the schools of the prophets, and must have been familiar with all those narratives and prophecies which might have prepared him to believe, and he had besides the experience of years to give power to his trust in God. Mary was of humbler parentage; her opportunities of instruction but meagre compared with his; hers too was the season of inexperienced youth; her faith was as yet unfortified by trial. What he was asked to believe was unlikely indeed, and altogether unlooked for, yet not beyond the power of nature. What she is asked to believe is a direct miraculous forthputting of the great power of God. Yet the old priest staggers, while the young maiden instantly confides.

In Mary's immediate and entire belief of the angel's word, a far greater confidence in God was shown than could have been shown by Zacharias, even had he received Gabriel's message as she did, without a suspicion or a doubt. She who, being betrothed, proved unfaithful, was, by the law of Moses, sentenced to be stoned to death; and though that law had now fallen into disuse, or was but seldom literally executed, yet she who was deemed guilty of such a crime stood exposed to the loss of character, and became the marked object of public opprobrium. Mary could not fail at once to perceive, and to be sensitive to the misconceptions and the perils which she would certainly incur. She might, in self-vindication, relate what Gabriel had told her, but how many would believe her word? What voucher could she give that it was actually a heavenly messenger she had



seen, and that what he had said was true? Many a distressing fear as to the future—as to the treatment she might receive from Joseph, the calumnies, the shame, the scorn to which from other quarters she might be exposed—might have arisen, if not to check her faith, yet to hold her own acquiescence in the will of God in timid and trembling suspense; but, strong in the simplicity and fulness of her trust, she puts all fears away, and committing herself into the hands of him whose angel she believes Gabriel to be, she says, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.”

Let us notice one other element in Mary's faith: its humility, its complete freedom from that undue thought of self which so often taints the faith of the most believing. Wonderful as the announcement is, that a child born of her should, by such miraculous conception as Gabriel had spoken of, be the Son of the Highest, should be a king sitting on the throne of David—his kingdom one that should outrival David's, of which there never should be an end—Mary harbors no doubt, raises no question, thinks not, speaks not of her own unworthiness to have such honor conferred on her, or of her unfitness to be the mother of such a child. As if one so unworthy of the least of God's mercies had no right or title to question his doings, however great a gift it pleased him to confer, she sinks all thought of self in thought of him, and says, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.” A finer instance of simple, humble, childlike, unbroken trust, we shall scarcely find in any record human or divine. “Blessed,” let us say with her cousin Elisabeth, “is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.” “Thou hast found favor,” said Gabriel to her, “with God.” It is possible to interpret that saying without any reference to Mary's character; to rest in the explanation, which is no doubt so far true, that it was God's good pleasure to select out of all the maidens of Israel this Mary of Nazareth, to be the most honored of the daughters of Eve. But if it be true, as we are elsewhere taught, that to him that hath it is given; that it is done unto every one according to his faith; that to him that believeth, all things are possible; if all the recorded experience of God's people confirms these general sayings of the divine word—are we wrong in considering the high honor conferred by God on Mary as a striking exemplification of the principle of adapting the gift to the character and capacity of the receiver?

His errand accomplished, Gabriel withdrew; and after the brief and exciting interview, Mary was left in solitude to her own thoughts. The words she had so lately heard kept ringing in her ears. She

tried to enter more and more into their meaning. As she did so, into what a tumult of wonder, and awe, and hope, must she have been thrown! She longs for some one with whom she can converse, to whom she may unburden her full mind and heart. There is no one near to whom she can or dare lay open all her secret thoughts; but she remembers now what Gabriel had told her about her kinswoman Elisabeth, who may well be intrusted with the secret, for she too has been placed in something like the same condition. Eager for sympathy, thirsting for companionship and full communion of the heart, she arises in haste, and departs for the distant residence of her cousin, who lives amid the far-off hills of Judah. It is a long—for one so young and so unprotected, it might be a perilous journey; nearly the whole length of the land—at least a hundred miles to traverse. But what is distance, what are dangers to one so lifted up with the exalted hopes to which she has been begotten! The hundred miles are quickly trodden; joy and hope make the long distance short. She reaches at last the house in which Elisabeth resides, and, with all due respect—such as is due from the inferior in station, the junior in years—she salutes the wife of the venerable priest. How filled with wonder must she have been, when, instead of the ordinary return to her salutation, Elisabeth breaks forth at once with the exclamation, “Blessed art thou among women;” the very words which the angel had so lately spoken in her astonished ear; “blessed is the fruit of thy womb.” She need not tell her secret; it is already known. What a fresh warrant this for the truth of all that Gabriel had said! It comes to confirm a faith already strong, but which might, perhaps, otherwise have begun to falter. It did not waver in the angel’s presence; but had month after month gone by, with no one near to share her thoughts or build her up in her first trust, might not that trust have yielded to human weakness and shown some symptom of decay? Well-timed, then, the kindly aid which the strange greeting of her cousin brought with it, supplying a new evidence that there should indeed be a performance of all those things which were told her of the Lord.

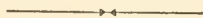
“And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” If in Mary we have one of the rarest exhibitions of humility towards God, of entire acquiescence in his will, in Elisabeth we have as rare and beautiful an instance of humility towards others, the entire absence of all selfish, proud, and envious feelings. Elisabeth leaves out of sight all the outer distinctions between herself and her humble relative, forgets the difference of age and rank, recognises at once, and ungrudgingly, the far higher distinction which had been

conferred by God upon Mary, and wonders even at the fact that to such a home as hers the honored mother of her Lord should come. But now the same spirit which had enlightened her eyes, and filled her heart, and opened her lips to give such a greeting to her cousin, comes in still fuller measure upon Mary, and to the wonderful salutation she gives the still more wonderful response in that strain of rapt and rhythmical praise which the holy catholic church has ever treasured as the first and fullest of our Christian hymns.

It divides itself into two parts. Rising at once to God as the source of all her blessings, her soul and all that was within her being stirred up to bless him, she celebrates, in lofty strains of praise, the Lord's goodness to herself individually. "My soul doth magnify the Lord." The Lord had magnified her, by his goodness had made her great, and she will magnify the Lord. The larger his gift to her, the larger the glory she will render to his great name. "My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." She hails the coming Saviour, as one needed by her as by all sinners, and embraces him, though her own son according to the flesh, as her God and Saviour; glorying more in the connection that she has with him in common with the entire multitude of the redeemed, than in that special maternal relationship in which she has the privilege to stand to him. Royal though her lineage, hers had been a low estate; her family poor in Judah; she among the least in her father's house; but in his great grace and infinite condescension the Lord had stooped to raise her from the dust, to set her upon a pinnacle of honor, and gratefully and gladly will she acknowledge the hand that did it. "For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden." And how high had he exalted her! The angel had called her blessed at Nazareth. Elisabeth, in the city of Judah, had repeated his saying; but Mary herself rises to the full conception and full acknowledgment of the honor the Lord had put upon her: "For, behold," she says, "from henceforth, all generations shall call me blessed." But it fills her with no pride, it prompts to no undue familiarity with God, or with his great name. She knows to whom to attribute this and every other gift and grace, and in the fulness of a devout and grateful reverence, she adds: "He that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name."

So much about herself and all that the Lord had done for her; but now she widens the embrace of her thanksgiving and praise, and losing all sense of her individuality, her virgin lips are touched with fire, and as poetess and prophetess of the infant church she pours forth the first triumphal song which portrays the general character of the gospel kingdom then to be ushered in.

In these strains there breathed the spirit at once of the Baptist and of Christ; of the two children of the two mothers who stood now face to face saluting one another. It is the voice of him who cried in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God: every valley shall be exalted, and every hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed." It is the voice of him who opened his mouth on the mountain side of Galilee, and said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." Do we not recognise the very spirit of the ministries both of John and of Jesus in the words: "He hath showed strength with his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever."



## II.

### THE NATIVITY.\*

It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to decide whether it was before or after her visit to Elisabeth, that Joseph was made acquainted with the condition of his betrothed. It must have thrown him into painful perplexity. He was not prepared at first to put implicit faith in her narrative, but neither was he prepared utterly to discredit it. To put her publicly away by a bill of divorce would have openly stamped her character with shame, and branded her child with infamy. He was unwilling that either of these injuries should be inflicted. To put her away privily would at least so far cover her reputation that the child might still be regarded as his; and this he had generously resolved to do, when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, removed all his doubts, and led him to take Mary as his wife. This difficulty overcome, Mary was quietly awaiting at Nazareth the expected birth. But it was not at Nazareth that the Messiah was to be born. An ancient prophecy had already designated another village, not in Galilee, but in Judea, as the destined birth-



place. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah"—so had the prophet Micah spoken seven hundred years before—"though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." To this village of Bethlehem Mary was to be guided at such a time as should secure the fulfilment of the prophecy.

A singular instrumentality was employed to gain this end. The Roman empire had now stretched its dominion to its widest limits, its power extending from the Euphrates to the British islands—from the Northern ocean to the borders of Ethiopia. Amid the prevalence of universal peace, the emperor, judging it a fit opportunity to ascertain by accurate statistics the population and resources of the different provinces of his dominions, issued an edict that a general census of the empire should be taken. It gratified his pride; it would be useful afterwards for many purposes of government, such as determining the taxes that might be imposed, or the levies that might be drawn from the different provinces. This edict of Augustus came to be executed in Judea. That country was not yet, in the outward form of its government, reduced to the condition of a Roman province; but Herod, while nominally an independent king, was virtually a Roman subject, and had to obey this as well as the other edicts of the emperor. In doing so, however, Herod followed the Jewish usage, and issued his instructions that every family should repair forthwith to the seat of his tribe, where its genealogical records were kept. The distinction of inheritance among the Jews had long been lost, but the distinction of families and tribes were still preserved, and Herod grounded upon that distinction the prescribed mode of registration or enrolment. Joseph and Mary, being both of the house and lineage of David, were obliged to repair to Bethlehem.

The manner in which the power of the Roman empire was thus employed to determine the birthplace of our Lord, naturally invites us to reflect upon the singular conjunction of outward circumstances, the strange timing of events that then took place. Embracing the whole sphere of reflection which thus opens to our view, let us, before fixing our attention upon the incidents of the particular narrative now before us, dwell for a little on the Divine wisdom that was displayed in fixing upon that particular epoch in the world's history as the one in which Jesus was born, and lived, and died. "When," says the inspired apostle, "the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." The expression used here, "the fulness of the time," evidently implies not only that



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there was a set time appointed beforehand of the Father, but that a series of preparatory steps were prearranged, the accomplishment of which had, as it were, to be waited for, ere the season best suited for the earthly advent of our Lord arrived. Some peculiar fitness must then have marked the time of Christ's appearance in this world. We are inclined to wonder that his appearance should have been so long delayed. Looking at all the mighty issues that hung suspended on his advent, we are apt at times to be surprised that so many thousand years should have been suffered to elapse ere the Son of God came down to save us; and yet, could the whole plan and counsels of the Deity be laid open to our eye, we cannot but believe that as there were the best and weightiest reasons why his coming should be deferred so long, there were also the best and weightiest reasons why it should be deferred no longer. To attempt on either side the statement of these reasons would be to attempt to penetrate within the veil that hides from us the secret things of God. Taking up, however, the history of the world as it is actually before us, it can neither be unsafe nor presumptuous to consider the actual and obvious benefits which have attended the coming of the Saviour at that particular period when it happened.

In the first place, we can readily enough perceive that it has served greatly to enhance the number and the force of the evidences in favor of the Divine origin and authority of his mission. Two of the chief outer pillars upon which the fabric of Christianity as a revelation from Heaven rests, are prophecy and miracles. But if Christ had come in the earliest ages; had the Incarnation followed quickly upon the Fall, so far as that coming was concerned there had been no room or scope for prophecy—one great branch of the Christian evidences had been cut off. As it now is, when we take up that long line of predictions, extending over more than three thousand years, from the first dim intimation that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent, down to the last prophecy of Malachi, that the Lord, whom the Jews sought, should come suddenly to his temple as the Messenger of the Covenant, whom they delighted in; when we mark the growing brightness and fulness that characterize each succeeding prediction, as feature after feature in the life and character of the great Messiah is added to the picture; when we compare the actual events with the passages in those ancient writings, in which they were repeatedly foretold, what a strong confirmation is given thereby to our faith, that He, of whom all those things had been spoken so long beforehand, was indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God. How much, then, in regard to prophecy, should we have

lost, had the interval between the Fall and the Incarnation not been long enough for that wonderful series of prophecies to be interposed.

Even as to the miracles we should have been put to great and serious disadvantage. Our faith in the reality of these miracles rests upon human testimony. That testimony is embodied in the writings of the apostles and their contemporaries. Those writings were issued at an advanced stage in the history of the world. They have come down to us through the same channel—they come, accompanied with the same vouchers for their authenticity—with a vast mass of other ancient writings, whose genuineness and credibility no one has ever denied. Our belief in the miracles of Jesus is thus bound up with our belief in a large portion of ancient history, for our knowledge of which we are indebted to writings of equal and greater antiquity than those of the New Testament. If we renounce the one, we must, in all fairness, renounce the other also. We must blot out all that is alleged to have happened in the world from this date upwards. It has been of the greatest possible service in the defence of Christianity against the attack of scholarly men, that the life of Jesus Christ, recorded in the four gospels, forms part and parcel of so large a portion of the preserved literature of antiquity—written, as it were, with the same ink, published at the same time, preserved in the same manner, so that together they must stand or together fall. How should it have stood, if, instead of being as it is, those miracles of Christ had been wrought far back in the world's history; the record of them written at some period preceding that from which any other authentic narrative had come down to us, some centuries before the date of the first acknowledged book of common history? Who does not perceive to what exceptions, just or unjust, they would, in consequence, have been exposed? Who does not perceive that, fixing his eye upon the barbarous and fabulous age in which the record originated, and upon the longer and more perilous passage that it had made, with some show at least of reason, with some apparent ground for the distinction, other ancient histories might have been received, and yet this one rejected? We have to thank God then for the wisdom of that order of things whereby, in consequence of the particular time at which Christ appeared, our faith in him as the heaven-sent Saviour rests upon the same solid basis with our faith in the best accredited facts of common history.

— We can discern another great and beneficial purpose that was served by the appearance of Christ at so late a period. The world was left for a long while to itself, to make full proof of its capabilities and dispositions. Many great results it realized. There were coun-

tries unvisited by any light from heaven, upon which the sun of civilization rose and shone with no mean lustre; where the intellect of man acted as vigorously as it has ever done on earth; where all the arts and refinements of life were brought to the highest state of culture; where taste and imagination revelled amid the choicest objects of gratification; where, in poetry and in painting, and in sculpture and in architecture, specimens of excellence were furnished which remain to this day the models that we strive to imitate. Was nothing gained by allowing Egypt, Greece, and Rome to run out their full career of civilization, while the light from heaven was confined meanwhile to the narrow limits of Judea? Was nothing gained by its being made no longer a matter of speculation but a matter of fact, that man may rise in other departments, but in religion will not, left unaided, rise to God; that he may make great progress in other kinds of knowledge, but make no progress in the knowledge of his Maker; that he may exercise his intellect, regale his fancy, refine his taste, correct his manners, but will not, cannot purify his heart? For what was the actual state of matters in those countries unblest by revelation? We have the description drawn by an unerring hand: "They became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things; who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever." We should have lost that exhibition of the greatest refinement coupled with the grossest idolatry, had the light of Revelation mingled universally from the first with the light of ordinary civilization.

Let us look a little more closely at the condition of Judea relatively to the Roman Empire at the time of our Lord's birth and death. It was owing, as we have already mentioned, to Herod's being nominally a sovereign but virtually a subject, that the order for registration came to be executed in Palestine which forced Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Is there nothing impressive in seeing the power of Rome thus interposed to determine the Redeemer's birthplace; the pride and policy of the world's great monarchy employed as an instrument for doing what the hand and counsel of the Lord had determined beforehand to be done? But even that nominal kingdom which Herod enjoyed soon passed from his family. A few years after the birth of Christ, Archelaus, who reigned in Judea in the room of his father Herod, was deposed and banished. Judea had then a Roman governor placed over it. Still, however, whether through



respect to its banished princes, or some latent reverence for its temple and ancient laws, the old national and priestly authorities were suffered to continue and enjoy some part of their old power and privileges. It was an anomalous and short-lived state of things; a Jewish law and Jewish officers, under a Roman law and Roman officers: the two fitted into each other by certain limits being assigned to the inferior or Jewish judicatories which they were not permitted to overpass. To no Jewish court, not even to the highest, the Sanhedrim, was the power of inflicting capital punishment intrusted; and it was wholly owing to that peculiar and temporary adjustment that all the formality of an orderly trial, and all the publicity of a legal execution was stamped upon the closing scenes of the Saviour's life. Had Jesus Christ appeared one half-century earlier, or one half-century later than he did; had he appeared when the Jewish authorities had unchecked power, how quickly, how secretly had their deadly malice discharged itself upon his head! No cross had been raised on Calvary. Had he come a few years later, when the Jews were stripped even of that measure of power they for a short season enjoyed, would the Roman authorities, then the only ones in the land, of their own motion have condemned and crucified him? Even as it was, it was impossible to persuade Pilate that Jesus was either a rival whom Cæsar had any reason to fear, or a rebel whom it became him to punish. Why then was the rule over Judea at this time in the hands of Rome? and why was that power induced to treat Judea for a time so differently from her other subject provinces? Why, but that she might be standing there ready, when Christ fell into the hands of his exasperated countrymen, to extricate him from that grasp under which in darkness he might have perished; and, though she too denied him justice, yet by her weak and vacillating governor, that hers might be the voice proclaiming aloud his innocence; hers the hand to erect the cross, and lift it up so high that the eyes of all the nations and all the ages might behold it.

But let us now turn to the narrative of our Redeemer's birth. When Mary was at first informed that Joseph and she must go to Bethlehem, perhaps she shrunk from so long a journey, lingered to the last ere she entered on it, and took it slowly. She was late at least in her arrival at the village. The inn, we may well suppose the single one that so small a place afforded for the entertainment of strangers,\* was crowded. She had to take the only accommodation

\* The inn or khan was frequently in the earliest times the house of the sheikh or chief man of the place. A very interesting *résumé* of all the historical notices of the inn or khan of Bethlehem is given in the *Athenæum* for December 26,



that the place afforded. Adopting here the early tradition of the church, as reported by Justin Martyr, who was born about a century afterwards, and within fifty miles from Bethlehem, let us say, she had to go into one of the caves or grottos in the rock common in the neighborhood, connected with the inn. There, where the camels and the asses had their stalls; there, far away from home and friends, among strangers all too busy to care for her; amid all the rude exposure and confusion of the place, Mary brought forth her first-born son, and when her hour was over, having swathed him with her own weak hands, laid him in a manger.

A very lowly mode of entering upon human life: nothing whatever to dignify, every thing to degrade. Yet the night of that wonderful birth was not to pass by without bearing upon its bosom a bright and signal witness of the greatness of the event. Sloping down from the rocky ridge on which Bethlehem stood, there lay some grassy fields, where all that night long some shepherds watched their flocks; humble, faithful, industrious men; men, too, of whom we are persuaded that, Simeon-like, they were waiting for the Consolation of Israel; who had simpler and more spiritual notions of their Messiah than most of the well-taught scribes of the metropolis. They would not have understood the angel's message so well; they would not have believed it so readily; they would not have hastened so quickly to Bethlehem; they would not have bent with such reverence over so humble a cradle; they would not have made known abroad what had been told them concerning this child—made it known as a thing in which they themselves most heartily believed—had they not been devout, believing men. Under the starry heavens, along the lonely hill-sides, these shepherds are keeping their watch, thinking perhaps of the time when these very sheep-walks were trodden by the young son of Jesse, or remembering some ancient prophecy that told of the coming of one who was to be David's son and David's Lord. Suddenly the angel of the Lord comes upon them, the glory of the Lord encompasses them with a girldo of light brighter than the mid-day sun could have thrown around them. They fear as they see that form, and as they are encircled by that glory, but their alarm is instantly dispelled. "Fear not," says the angel, "for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Mary had been told that her child was to be called

1863, which makes it more than probable that the place of Christ's birth was close to, if not within, the very house to which Boaz conducted Ruth, and in which Samuel anointed David king.

Jesus, that he was to be great, to be son of the Highest, the heir to his father David's throne, the head of an everlasting monarchy. Joseph had been told that he was to call the child born of Mary, Jesus, for he was to save his people from their sins—a simpler and less Jewish description of his office. The angel speaks of him to these shepherds in still broader and sublimer terms. Unto them and unto all people this child was to be born, and unto them and unto all he was to be a Saviour, Christ the Lord, the only instance in which the double epithet, Christ the Lord, is given in this form to him. A universal, a divine Messiahship was to be his.

The shepherds ask no sign, as Zacharias and Mary had done; yet they got one: "And this," said the angel, "shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." But one such child, born that night, wrapped up in such a way, lying in such a place, could so small a village as Bethlehem supply. That village lay but a mile or so from the spot they stood on; the sign could speedily be verified. But they have something more to see and hear ere their visit to the village is paid. The voice of that single angel has scarce died away in the silence of the night—lost in wonder they are still gazing on his radiant form—when suddenly a whole multitude of the heavenly host bursts upon their astonished vision, lining the illuminated heavens. Human eyes never saw before or since so large a company of the celestial inhabitants hovering in our earthly skies; and human ears never heard before or since such a glorious burst of heavenly praise as those angels then poured forth—couching it in Hebrew speech, their native tongue for the time foregone, that these listening shepherds may catch up at once the cradle-hymn that heaven now chants over the new-born Saviour; that these shepherds may repeat it to the men of their own generation; that from age to age it may be handed down, and age after age may take it up as supplying the fittest terms in which to celebrate the Redeemer's birth—"Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, good will towards men."

At the moment when these words first saluted human ears, what a contrast did they open up between earth and heaven! As that babe was born in Bethlehem, this world lay around him in silence, in darkness, in ignorant unconcern. But all heaven was moved; for, large as that company of angels was which the shepherds saw, what were they to the thousands that encircle the throne of the Eternal! And the song of praise the shepherds heard, what was it to the voice, as of many waters, which rose triumphant around that throne! That little dropping of its praise committed for human use to human keep-

ing, heaven hastily veiled itself again from human vision. The whole angelic manifestation passed rapidly away. The shepherds are startled in their midnight rounds; a flood of glory pours upon them; their eyes are dazzled with those forms of light; their ears are full of that thrilling song of praise; suddenly the glory is gone; the shining forms have vanished; the stars look down as before through the darkness; they are left to a silent, unspeakable wonder and awe. They soon, however, collect their thoughts, and promptly resolve to go at once into the village. They go in haste; the sign is verified; they find Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger. They justify their intrusion by telling all that they had just seen and heard; and amid the sorrows and humiliations of that night, how cheering to Mary the strange tidings that they bring! Having told these, they bend with rude yet holy reverence over the place where the infant Saviour lies, and go their way to finish their night-watch among the hills, and then for all their life long afterwards to repeat to wondering listeners the story of that birth. With those shepherds let us bend for a moment or two over the place where the infant Redeemer lay, to meditate on one or two of the lessons which it is fitted to suggest.

By the manner of his entrance into this world, Christ hath dignified the estate of infancy, has hallowed the bond which binds the mother to her new-born child. He, the great Son of God, stooped to assume our humanity. He might have done so at once; taken it on him in its manhood form. The second Adam might have stood forth like the first, no childhood passed through. Why did he become an infant before he was a man? Was it not, among other reasons which may suggest themselves, that he might consecrate that first of human ties, that earliest estate of human life? The grave, we say, has been hallowed—has not the cradle also—by Christ's having lain in it?

By the humiliation of his birth, he stripped the estate of poverty of all reproach. Of all who have ever been born into this world, he was the only one with whom it was a matter of choice in what condition he should appear. The difference, indeed, between our highest and our lowest—between a chamber in a palace, and a manger in a stable—could have been but slight to him; yet he chose to be born in the stable, and to be laid in the manger. And that first stage of his earthly life was in keeping with all that followed. For thirty years he depended on his own or others' labor for his daily bread: for three years more, he was a houseless, homeless man, with no provision but that which the generosity of others supplied: "The foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests; but he had not where

to lay his head." And has not that life of his redeemed poverty from all disgrace; has it not lifted it to honor?

As we bend in wonder over the infant Saviour, we learn the difference between the inferior and higher forms of an earthly greatness. On that night when Christ was born, what a difference was there in all outward marks of distinction, between that child of the Hebrew mother as he lay in his lowly cradle, and the Augustus Cæsar whose edict brought Mary to Bethlehem, as he reposed in his imperial palace! And throughout the lifetimes of the two there was but little to lessen that distinction. The name of the one was known and honored over the whole civilized globe: the name of the other scarce heard of beyond the narrow bounds of Judea. And when repeated there, it was too often as a byword and a reproach. How stands it now? The throne of the Cæsars, the throne of mere human authority and power, has perished. That name, at which nations trembled, carries no power over the spirits of men. But the empire of Jesus, the empire of pure, undying, self-sacrificing love, will never perish; its sway over the conscience and hearts of men, as the world grows older becomes ever wider and stronger. His name shall be honored while sun and moon endure; men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed. This world owes an infinite debt to him, were it for nothing else than this, that he has so exalted the spiritual above the material; the empire of love above the empire of power.

Again we bend over this infant as he lies in that manger at Bethlehem, and as we do so, strange scenes in his after life rise upon our memory. Those little, tender feet, unable to sustain the infant frame, are yet to tread upon the roughened waters of a stormy lake, as men tread the solid earth. At the touch of that little, feeble hand, the blind eye is to open, and the tied tongue to be unloosed, and diseases of all kinds are to take wings and flee away. That soft, weak voice, whose gentle breathings in his infant slumbers can scarce be heard, is to speak to the winds and the waves, and they shall obey it; is to summon the dead from the sepulchre, and they shall come forth. Who then, and what was he, whose birth the angels celebrated in such high strains? None other than he of whom Isaiah, anticipating the angels, had declared: "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." It was He, the Word, who was from the beginning with God and who was God, who was thus made flesh and came to dwell among us. This is, in truth, the central fact or doctrine of our religion; the mystery of mysteries; the



one great miracle of divine, everlasting love. Admit it, and all the other wonders of the Saviour's life become not only easy of belief—they appear but the natural and suitable incidents of such a history as his. Deny it, and the whole gospel narrative becomes an inexplicable enigma. The very heart of its meaning taken out of it, you may try to turn it into a myth or fable if you please; but a credible story it no longer is. No; not credible even in that part of it into which nothing of the supernatural enters. Christ was either what he claimed to be, and what all those miraculous attestations conspire to establish that he was; he was either one with the Father, knowing the Father as the Father knew him, doing whatever the Father did—so direct and full a revelation of the Father that it could be truly said that he who had seen him had seen the Father likewise; or his character for simplicity and honesty and truthfulness stands impeached, and the whole fabric of Christianity is overturned.

Let those angels teach us in what light we should regard the birth of Christ, the advent of the Redeemer. They counted it as glad tidings of great joy that they gave forth when they announced that birth; they broke forth together in exulting praises over it, as glorifying God in the highest, as proclaiming peace on earth, as indicating good will towards men. In that good will of God to us in Christ let us heartily believe; into that peace with God secured to us in Christ let us humbly and gratefully enter. Those glad tidings of great joy let us so receive as that they shall make us joyful, that so Christ may be glorified in us on earth, and we be glorified with him throughout eternity.

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### III.

#### THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE.\*

ON the eighth day after his birth Christ was circumcised: the visible token of his being one of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh was thus imposed. In his case, indeed, this rite could not have that typical or spiritual meaning which in all other cases it bore. It could point to no spiritual defilement needing to be removed. But though on that ground exemption might have been claimed for him, on other grounds it became him in this as in other respects to fulfil the requirements of the Jewish law. From the earliest period, from the first institution of the rite, it had been the Jewish custom to give

\* Luke 2:21-33.



its name to the child on the occasion of its circumcision. The angel, indeed, who had appeared to Zacharias and to Mary, had in each instance announced beforehand what the names of the two children were to be. These however were not formally imposed till the day of their circumcision. In the Baptist's case there was a large assemblage of relations and friends upon that day; and springing out of the peculiar condition of the father, the naming of John was attended with such striking circumstances, that the fame of them was noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judea. At Bethlehem Joseph and Mary were too far away from all their kindred to call any assemblage of them together. In their humbler position they might not have done it, even had they been resident at the time in Nazareth. Quietly, privately, obscurely, they circumcised their child, and gave to him the name of *Jesus*, that name so rich in meaning, so full of promise.

Forty days after the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary carried the infant up to Jerusalem. There was a double object in this visit. Mary had to present the offering which the Jewish law required at the hands of every mother when the days of her purification were accomplished. This offering, in the case of all whose circumstances enabled them to present it, was to consist of a lamb of the first year for a burnt-offering, and a young pigeon or a turtle-dove for a sin-offering. With that consideration for the poor which marks so many of the Mosaic ordinances, it was provided that if the mother were not able to furnish a lamb, a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons were to be accepted, the one for the burnt-offering, and the other for the sin-offering. That such was the offering which Joseph and Mary presented to the priest, carried with it an unmistakable evidence of the poverty of their estate. Besides discharging this duty, Mary had at the same time to dedicate her infant son as being a first-born child to the Lord, and to pay the small sum fixed as the price of his redemption.

There were few more common, few less noticeable sights than the one witnessed that forenoon within the temple when Christ's presentation as a first-born child took place. It happened every day that mothers brought their children to be in this way dedicated and redeemed. It was part of the daily routine work of the priest-in-waiting to take their payments, to hold up the children before the altar, to enroll their names in the register of the first-born, and so to complete the dedication; a work which from its commonness he went through without giving much attention either to parents or to child, unless indeed there was something special in their rank, or their

appearance, or their offerings. But here there was nothing of this kind. A poor man and woman, in humblest guise, with humblest offerings, present themselves before him. The woman holds out her first-born babe; he takes, presents, enrolls, and hands it back to her; all seems over, and what is there in so common, plain, and simple an old Jewish custom worthy of any particular notice? We shall be able to answer that question better, by considering for a moment what this rite of the dedication of the first-born among the Israelites really meant, especially as applied to this first-born, to this child Jesus.

When Moses first got his commission from the Lord in Midian, and was told to go and work out the great deliverance of his people from their Egyptian bondage, the last instruction he received was this: "And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first-born. And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy first-born." *Exod. 4:22, 23.* As a mother reclaims her infant from the hands of a cruel nurse, as a father reclaims his son from the hands of a severe and capricious school-master, so the Lord reclaimed his son, his first-born Israel, from the hands of Pharaoh. But the king's haughty answer to the demand was: "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go?" Sign after sign was shown, wonder after wonder wrought, woe after woe inflicted, but the spirit of the proud king remained unbroken. At last, all lesser instruments having failed, the sword was put into the hands of the destroying angel, and he was sent forth to execute that foretold doom, which—meant to strike at the very heart of the entire community of Egypt—fell actually only upon the first-born in every family. The nation was taken as represented by these its first and best. In their simultaneous death on that terrible night, Egypt throughout all its borders was smitten. But the first-born of Israel was saved, and through them, as representatives of the whole body of the people, all Israel was saved; saved, yet not without blood, not without the sacrifice of the lamb, for every household had the sprinkling of its shed blood upon the lintel and door-post. It was to preserve and perpetuate the memory of this judgment and this mercy, this smiting and this shielding, this doom and this deliverance, that the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, "Sanctify unto me all the first-born, both of man and beast; it is mine: for on the day that I smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, I hallowed unto me all the first-born in Israel; mine they shall be: I am the Lord. And it shall be, when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is

this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage: and it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the Lord slew all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both the first-born of man and the first-born of beast: therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the first-born of my children I redeem." Exod. 13:1; Numb. 3:13; Exod. 13:14, 15. During the earlier and simpler patriarchal economy, the first-born in every family was also its priest. Had that rule been followed when the twelve tribes were organized into the Theocracy, the first-born invested with a double sacredness, as peculiarly the redeemed of the Lord, would have been consecrated to the office of the priesthood. Instead of this, the tribe of Levi was set apart that it might supply all the priests required for the services of the sanctuary; and the first-born for whom they were thus substituted were redeemed or released from that service by the payment each, on the day of their presentation in the temple, of a merely nominal gratuity; by that payment, the original right and title, as it were, of the first-born to the office of the priesthood being still preserved.

This rite, then, of the presentation of the first-born in the temple had a double character and office. It was a standing memorial or remembrancer of a past fact in the history of the Jewish people—the deliverance of their forefathers from the bondage of Egypt, and especially of the shielding of their first-born from the stroke which fell on all the first-born of the Egyptians; but the deliverance from Egyptian bondage was itself a type and prophecy of another higher and wider deliverance, and especially of the manner in which that deliverance was to be wrought out.

In the light of this explanation, let us look yet once again at our Lord's presentation in the temple as a first-born child, and see whether—as the eye of faith looks through the outward actions to that which the actions symbolize, looks through the outward form and discerns the spiritual significance—the whole scene does not become, as it were, transfigured before us. You mount the steps, and come up into this temple at Jerusalem. It is neither a feast-day nor a Sabbath-day, nor is it the fixed hour for prayer. A few priests, or Levites, or other hangers-on of the holy place, are loitering in the outer courts. A man and woman in Galilean dress, the woman bearing an infant in her arms, cross the court and go forward to where the priest is standing, whose duty it is to present whatever individual sacrifices or oblations may that day be offered. They tell the priest their errand, hand to him or to one of his attendants the two young



turtle-doves and the five shekels of the sanctuary. He in his turn goes through with his part of the prescribed ceremonial, and gives the child back again to his parents as a first-born child that had been duly devoted to the Lord. The father, the mother, the priest, whatever onlookers there are, all imagine that nothing more has been done in all this than is so often done when first-born children are consecrated. But was it so? Who is this child that lies so passive on its mother's breast, and all unconscious of what is being done with him, is handled by the officiating priest? He is, as his birth had proclaimed him to be, one of the seed of Abraham, and yet he afterwards said of himself, "Before Abraham was, I am." He is, as the angel had proclaimed him to be, David's son and David's heir; but as he said afterwards of himself, the root as well as the branch of David: David's Lord as well as David's son. He is the first-born of Mary, but he is also the first-born of every creature, the beginning of the creation of God. He is the infant of a few weeks old, but also the Ancient of Days, whose goings forth were from of old, from everlasting. Here then at last is the Lord, the Jehovah, whom so many of the Jews were seeking, brought suddenly, almost, as one might say, unconsciously into his own temple. Here is the Lamb of God, of old provided, now publicly designated and set apart—of which the paschal one, the sight of whose blood warded off the stroke of the destroying angel, was but the imperfect type. Here is the one and only true High Priest over the house of God, consecrated to his office, of whose all prevailing, everlasting, and unchangeable priesthood, the Aaronic priesthood, the priesthood of the first-born, was but the dim shadow. Here is the Son presented to the Father, within the holy place on earth, as he enters upon that life of service, suffering, sacrifice, the glorious issue of which was to be his entering not by the blood of bulls and goats, but by his own blood, into that holy place not made with hands, having obtained eternal redemption for us, there for ever to present himself before the Father, as the living head of the great community of the redeemed, the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven.

How little did that Jewish priest, who took the infant Saviour and held him up before the altar, imagine that a greater than Moses, one greater than the temple, was in his arms! How little did he imagine, as he inscribed the new name of Jesus in the roll of the first-born of Israel, that he was signing the death-warrant of the Mosaic economy now waxing old and ready to vanish away; that he was ushering in that better, brighter day, when neither of the temple upon Mount Zion, nor of that upon Gerizim, it should be said that

there only was the true worship of Jehovah celebrated; but when, taught by this very Jesus to know God as our Father in heaven, unfettered and redeemed humanity in every land should worship him who is a Spirit in spirit and in truth. Yet even so it was; Christ's first entrance into the temple, his dedication there unto the Lord, was no such common ceremonial as we might fancy it to be. Simple in form, there lay in it a depth and sublimity of meaning. It was nothing else than the first formal earthly presentation to the Father of the incarnate Son of God, his first formal earthly dedication to that great work given him to do. And was it not meet when the Father and the Son were brought visibly together in this relationship, that the presence of the Holy Spirit should be manifested; that by that Spirit Simeon and Anna should be called in, and by that Spirit their lips should be made to speak the infant Saviour's praise; that so within the temple, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit might all appear, dignifying with their presence our Lord's first entrance into the holy place; his consecration to his earthly mediatorial work?

Two fitter channels through which the Spirit's testimony might thus be given could scarcely have been chosen. Simeon and Anna both belonged to that limited number, who in the midst of all the crude and carnal conceptions of the Messiah prevalent among their countrymen, were waiting for Christ and longing for his coming, not so much for the temporal as for the spiritual benefits which his coming and kingdom were to convey. Both were well stricken in years, fit representatives of the closing age of Judaism; both were full of faith and hope, fit representatives of that new age whose earliest dawn they were among the first to notice and to welcome.

So ardent as his years ran on had Simeon's faith and hope become, that this one thing had he desired of the Lord, that before his eyes closed in death they might rest upon his Saviour. And he was heard as to that for which he had so longed. It was revealed to him that the desire of his heart should be granted, but how and when he knew not. That forenoon, however, a strong desire to go up into the temple seizes him. He was not accustomed to go there at that hour, but he obeyed that inward impulse, which perhaps he recognized as the work of the Divine Spirit, by whom the gracious revelation had been made to him. He enters the temple courts; he notices a little family group approach; he sees an infant dedicated to the Lord. That infant, an inward voice proclaims to him is the Messiah he has been waiting for, the Consolation of Israel come at last in the flesh. Then comes into his heart a joy beyond all bounds. It kindles in his radiant looks; it beats in his swelling veins; the strength



of youth is back again into his feeble limbs. He hastens up to Mary, takes from the wondering yet consenting mother's hands the consecrated babe, and clasping it to his beating bosom, with eyes uplifted to heaven, he says, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." Joseph and Mary stand lost in wonder. How has this stranger come to see aught uncommon in this child; how come to see in him the salvation of Israel? Have some stray tidings of his birth come into the holy city from the hill country of Judea, or has the wondrous tale the shepherds of Bethlehem "made known abroad," been repeated in this old man's hearing? What he says is in curious harmony with all the angel had announced to Mary and to the shepherds about the child, and yet there is a difference; for now, for the first time, is it distinctly declared that this child shall be a light to lighten the Gentiles; nay, his being such a light is placed even before his being the glory of Israel. Has Simeon had a separate revelation made to him from heaven, and is this an independent and fuller testimony borne to the Messiahship of Jesus?

Simeon sees the wonder that shines out in their astonished looks; and, the spirit of prophecy imparted—that spirit which had been mute in Israel since the days of Malachi, but which now once more lifts up its voice within the temple—he goes on, after a gentle blessing bestowed upon both parents, to address himself particularly to Mary, furnishing in his words to her fresh material for wonder, while opening a new future to her eye. "Behold," he said to her, "this child of thine is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel." He may have meant, in saying so, that the purpose and effect of the Lord's showing unto Israel would be the casting down of many in order to the raising of them up again; the casting of them down from their earlier, worldlier thoughts and expectations, in order to the lifting them to higher, worthier, more spiritual conceptions of his character and office. Or, perhaps it was to different and not to the same persons that he referred, the truth revealed being this: that while some were to rise, others were to fall; that the stone which to some was to be a foundation-stone elect and precious, was to others to be a stone of stumbling and rock of offence; that Jesus was to come for judgment into the world, that those who saw not might see, that those who saw might be made blind; his name to be the savor of life unto life to the one, the savor of death unto death to the other.

From all Mary had yet heard, she might have imagined that her child would be welcomed by all Israel—so soon as the day for his revelation came—as its long-looked for deliverer; and that a career of unsuffering triumph would lie before him—a career in whose honors and bliss she could scarcely help at times imagining that she should have a share. But now, for the first time, the indication is clearly given that all Israel was not to hail her child and welcome him as its Messiah; that hostility was to spring up even within the ranks of the chosen people; that he was to be a “sign which should be spoken against;” or rather—for such is the more literal rendering of the words—a butt or mark at which many shafts or javelins should be launched. Nor was Mary herself to escape. Among the many swords or darts levelled at his breast, one was to reach hers: “Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also.” Strange that in the very centre of so broad and comprehensive a prophecy concerning Christ, such a minute and personal allusion to Mary should come in; a high honor put upon the mother of our Lord that her individual sorrows should be foretold in this way in connection with the deeper sorrows of her Son; and a singular token of the tender sympathy of Him by whom it was prompted, that now when her heart was filling with strange, bright hopes, now while her child was yet an infant, now ere the evil days drew on, when she should have to see him become the object of reproach and persecution, and stand herself to look at him upon that cross of shame and agony on which they hung him up to die—that now to temper her first-born joy, to prepare and fortify her for the bitter trials in store for her, this prophecy should have been thus early spoken.

“That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.” No such revealer of the thoughts of men’s hearts has the world ever seen as Jesus Christ. His presence, his character, his ministry brought out to light the hidden things of many a human spirit. He walked abroad applying upon all sides the infallible test which tried the temper of the soul: “If I had not come,” he said, “they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin.” In its uncloaked nakedness he made the sin be seen. “I know you,” said he to the Jews, “that ye have not the love of God in you;” and the reason that he gave for this was, that they had rejected him. Coming into contact with them all in turn, he revealed the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, the worldliness of the young ruler, the faith of the Syro-Phœnician woman, the malice of the Sanhedrim, the weakness of Pilate, the treachery of Judas, the rashness of Peter, the tender care and sympathy of Mary. Throughout the whole of his earthly life, the description given

here by Simeon was continually being verified. That description itself throughout reveals its divine origin and character. It proves itself to have been no bold conjecture of human wisdom, but a revelation of the future made by God.

Simeon's prophetic portraiture of the intention and effect of the advent of the Redeemer had scarcely been completed when another testimony was added, that of the aged Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, who, like her venerable compeer, appears but this once in the sacred page, and then is hidden for ever from our eyes. It is not said that any special impulse drew her to the temple. It was her daily haunt. Instantly serving God day and night, her life was one of fastings and prayers. When it was also made known to her that the infant whom she met in the temple was no other than the Christ of God, her song of praise was added to that of Simeon, but the words of it are lost. It would, we may be assured, be a suitable accompaniment, a fit response to his. He, as may be believed, retired from the temple to close his eyes in peace; but she was moved to go about and speak of the Lord whom she had found to all that looked for redemption in Jerusalem—the first preacher of the gospel, the first female evangelist in the holy city—

In the briefest terms, let one or two practical reflections be now suggested.

Simeon did not wish to die till he had seen the Lord his Saviour; as soon as he saw Him he was ready and willing to depart. Till our spiritual eyes be opened to see Him who is the way, the truth, and the life, which of us is ready to meet our Maker—is prepared to behold his face in peace? But when once our eyes have seen and our hearts embraced him, which of us should fear to die? Simeon desired to depart. It was not that, like Job, he wished to die because life had become burdensome. His wish to depart was not the product of hours of bitter sorrow, but of a moment of exceeding joy. It was not that, like Paul, he desired to depart in order to be with Christ.—It was the fulness of that gratitude which he felt for the great gift of God in allowing him to see Christ in the flesh; it was the depth of that satisfaction and delight which filled his heart as his arms enfolded Jesus, which, leaving nothing more, nothing higher that he could hope for in this world, drew forth, as by a natural impulse, the expression, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Though nothing is said about his age in the evangelical narrative, we may believe that the length of years which he had already reached, making the thought of approaching departure from this world familiar, conspired, if not

to beget, yet to give emphasis to this expression of his desire. But it may be well, even though we be not in his exact position, to put to ourselves the question whether any desire or any willingness we have ever had to die was the fruit of hours of earthly disappointments, or of moments of spiritual elation and joy.

Christ was set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; he is set for the fall and rising again of many still. His gospel never leaves us as it finds us. It softens or it hardens, it kills or it makes alive. That stone which the Jewish builders rejected is rejected by many builders still, and yet it is the headstone of the corner. Blessed is he who grounds thereon his humble yet undoubting trust. "But many among them," saith the prophet, "shall stumble and fall, and be broken" upon this stone. May our feet be shielded from such a fate!

The sufferings of Mary were linked with the sufferings of her Son. It was his being wounded that wounded her. It was the stroke which descended on him that sent the sword into her heart. The same kind of tie should bind every believer to Christ. He is so sensitive as to all that affects his people's welfare and happiness, that whatever hurts the least of these his little ones touches the apple of his eye. And they in turn should be so sensitive as to all that affects his honor, his cause, his kingdom on earth, that whatever damages or injures them should send a thrill of answering sorrow through their heart.

Finally, Christ is the great Revealer of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Are we proud, are we covetous, are we worldly, are we self-willed? Nothing will more bring out the sway and empire of these or any kindred passions over us than the bringing closer home to us the holy character and unmitigable claims of Jesus Christ. Keep them at a distance, and the strong man armed keeps the palace of the soul, and all comparatively is at peace. Bring them near, force them home upon the conscience and the heart; then it is that the inward struggle begins; and in that struggle the spirit unconsciously revealeth its true condition before God.



## IV. •

## THE VISIT OF THE MAGI.\*

THREE striking incidents marked the birth and infancy of our Lord. *First*, the midnight appearance of the angelic host to the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem, and their visit to the village in which the great birth had that night occurred; *second*, the presentation of Jesus as a first-born child in the temple, and the testimony there given to him in the prophetic utterances of Simeon and Anna; and *third*, the visit of the wise men from the East, and the worship and offerings which they presented to the new-born child. Each of these had its special wonders; in each a supernatural attestation to the greatness of the event was given; and woven together, they form the wreath of heavenly glory hung by the Divine hand around the infancy of the Son of Mary.

It is impossible to determine the date of the visit of the wise men. It must have occurred not long after the birth, while Joseph and Mary still lingered in Bethlehem, and it is of little moment whether we place it before or after the presentation in the Temple at Jerusalem. The epithet by which Matthew describes to us these Eastern strangers is not so vague and indefinite as it seems in our translation. He calls them Magi from the East. The birthplace and natural home of the magian worship was in Persia. And there the Magi had a place and power such as the Chaldæans had in Babylon, the Hierophants in Egypt, the Druids in Gaul, and the Brahmins still have in India. They formed a tribe or caste, priestly in office, princely in rank. They were the depositaries of nearly all the knowledge or science existing in the country where they lived; they were the first professors and practisers of astrology, worshippers of the sun and the other heavenly bodies, from whose appearance and movements they drew their divination as to earthly events—all illustrious births below being indicated, as they deemed, by certain peculiar conjunctions of the stars above. Both as priests and diviners they had great power. They formed, in fact, the most influential section of the community. In political affairs their influence was predominant. The education of royalty was in their hands; they filled all the chief offices of state; they constituted the supreme counsel of the realm. As originally applied to this Median priest-caste, the term Magi was one of dignity and honor. Afterwards, when transferred to other countries,

\* Matthew 2 : 1-12.



and employed to designate not that peculiar sacerdotal order, but all persons of whatever description who were professors of astrology and practisers of divination, as these astrologers and diviners sunk in character, and had recourse to all kinds of mean imposture, the name of magian or magician was turned into one of dishonor and reproach. There seems no reason, however, to doubt that it was in its earlier and honorable meaning that it is used in the gospel narrative.

Remarkable passages, both from Roman and Jewish writers,\* have been quoted which inform us that at the period of our Saviour's birth, there prevailed generally over the East, in regions remote from Palestine, a vague but strong belief that one born in Judea was to arise and rule the world. Popularly this expectation was confined to the appearance of some warrior chief who, by the might of his victorious arms, was to subdue the nations under him. But there were many then in every land, whose faith in their old hereditary religions had been undermined; who from those Jews now scattered everywhere abroad, had learned some of the chief elements of the pure Israelitish faith; and half embracing it, had risen to a desire and hope which took a higher ground, and who in this expected king that was to spring out of Judah, were ready to hail a spiritual guide and deliverer. Such, we believe, were the Magi of Matthew's narrative. Balaam, a man of their own or a kindred tribe, in their own or in a neighboring country, had centuries before foretold that a star should come out of Jacob, and a sceptre rise out of Israel. Numb. 24: 17. This and other of those old Jewish prophecies which pointed to the same event may have in some form or other reached their ears, preparing them for the birth of one who in the first instance was to be the king of the Jews, but whose kingdom was to connect itself with other than mere earthly interests, to have intimate relationships with man's highest hopes and his eternal destiny. Sharing the general hope, but with that hope purified and exalted, let us believe that these Magi were earnestly, devoutly, waiting the coming of this new king of the Jews and of mankind. Their office and occupation led them to the nightly study of the starry heavens; but still as they gazed and speculated and divined, they felt that it was not from that glittering broadspread page of wonders hung above their heads that any clear or satisfying information as to the divine character and purposes was to be derived. Much as they fancied they could glean from them as to man's earthly fortunes, what could the bright mute stars tell them of the eternal destinies of those unnumbered human spirits which beneath their light were, generation after generation,

\* Suetonius, Tacitus, Josephus.

passing away into the world beyond the grave? How often may the deep sigh of disappointment have risen from the depths of these men's hearts, as to all their earnest interrogatories not a word of distinct response was given, and the heavens they gazed on kept the untold secret locked in their capacious bosom. But the sigh of the earnest seeker after truth, like the sigh of the lowly, penitent, and contrite heart, never rises to the throne of heaven in vain. Many errors may have mingled with those men's religious opinions, much superstition have been in their religious worship, but God met in mercy the truth-seeking spirit in the midst of its errors, and made its very superstition pave the way to faith.

One night, as those Magi stood watching their cloudless skies, their practised eye detected a new-come stranger among the stars. The appearance of new stars is no novelty to the astronomer. We have authentic records of stars of the first magnitude, rivalling in their brilliance the brightest of our old familiar planets, shining out suddenly in places where no stars had been seen before, and after a season vanishing away. Singular conjunctions of the planets have also been occasionally observed, some of which are known to have occurred about the time of the Redeemer's birth. It may possibly have been some such strange appearance in the heavens that attracted the eyes of the wise men. It is said, however, in the narrative, that the star went before them till it came and stood over where the young child was. Understanding this as implying an actual and visible movement of the star—that it went, lantern-like, before them on their way, and indicated in some way, as by a finger of pointing light, the very spot where they were to find the child—as no such function could be discharged by any of the ordinary inhabitants of the heavens, all about its appearance must be taken as supernatural, and we must regard it as some star-like meteor shining in our lower atmosphere. But be it what it might, however kindled, whatever curiosity its strange appearance might excite—though the Magi, penetrated by the popular belief, might naturally enough have regarded it as an omen of the great expected birth—the star could of itself tell nothing. However miraculous its appearance, if left without an interpreter, it was but a dumb witness after all. The conviction is almost forced upon us that, in addition to the external sign, there was some divine communication made to these Magi, informing them of the errand which the star was commissioned to discharge. But why the double indication of the birth—the star without, the revelation made within? Why, but as an evidence and illustration of the care and gracious condescension of Him who not only to the spiritual commu-

nication added the external sign, to be a help to the weak, infant, staggering faith, but who, in the very shaping of that outward sign, was pleased to accommodate himself to these men's earthly calling; and while to Mary and to the shepherds—Jews living in a land where stories of angelic manifestations were current—angels were sent to make announcement of the Redeemer's birth, to those astrologers of the East he sends a star, meeting them in their own familiar walks, showing itself among the divinities of their erring worship, gently to lead them into His presence to whom the world's true worship was to be given.

But when this star appeared, and after they understood what its presence betokened, was it a spontaneous impulse on their part to go and do homage to the new-born King, or did He who revealed the birth enjoin the journey? Whatever the prompting, human or divine, on which they acted, it does not appear that in the first instance any thing beyond the general information was communicated, that somewhere in Judea the birth had taken place. The star, it would appear, did not go before them all the way, for in that case they would not have needed to institute any further inquiry. Its first office discharged, the star disappeared, leaving them to have recourse to such common sources of information as lay open to them. It was at Jerusalem, in the capital of the country over which this new-born King was to reign; it was there, if anywhere, the needed intelligence was to be obtained. To Jerusalem, therefore, they repair. Entering the holy city, they put eagerly and expectantly the question, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."

The question takes the startled city by surprise. No one here has seen the star, no one here has heard about this king. The tidings of the arrival of those distinguished strangers, and of the question which they asked, are carried quickly to the palace, and circulate rapidly through the city. Herod is troubled. The usurper trembles on his throne. Has a new claimant, with better title to that throne, indeed been born? How comes it, if it be so, that he has never heard of such a birth? Has treachery been already busy at its work; have they been concealing from him this event? Have the enemies of himself and of his family been cloaking thus their projects, waiting only for the fit time to strike the blow, and hurl him from his seat? The blood he had already shed to reach that height begins to cry for vengeance, and spectres of the slaughtered dead shake their terrors in his face. Herod's trouble at the tidings we well can understand, but why was it that all Jerusalem was troubled along with him?

Was it the simple fear of change, the terror of another revolution ; the knowledge of Herod's jealous temper and bloodthirsty disposition ; the alarm lest his vindictive spirit might prompt him to some new deed of cruelty, in order to cut off this rival ? If so, how low beneath the yoke of tyranny must the spirit of those citizens of Jerusalem have sunk ; how completely, for the time, must the selfish have absorbed the patriotic sentiment in their breasts !

But whatever alarm he felt, whatever dark purposes were brooding in his heart, Herod at first concealed them. He must know more about this affair, get some information before he acts. He calls together the chief priests and the scribes, and at no loss, apparently, to identify the King of the Jews that the Magi asked about with the Christ the Messiah of ancient prophecy, he demands of them where Christ should be born. As little at a loss, they lay their hand at once upon the prophecy of Micah, which pointed to Bethlehem as the birthplace. Furnished with this information, the King invites the Magi to a private interview, conveys to them the information he had himself received, and concealing his sinister designs, sends them off to Bethlehem to search diligently for the child, and when they had found him, to bring him word again, that he too, as he falsely said, might go and worship him.

Let us pause a moment here to reflect upon the impression which this visit to Jerusalem, and the state of things discovered there, was fitted to make upon these eastern visitors. It must surely have surprised them to come among the very people over whom this new-born King was to rule, to enter the capital of their country, the city of the chief priests and scribes by whom, if by any, an event so signal should have been known, and to find there no notice, no knowledge of the birth ; to find instead that they, coming from a strange land, professors of another faith, are the first to tell these Jews of the advent of their own king. It must have done more than surprise them ; they too, in their turn, must have been troubled and perplexed to see how the announcement, when it was made, was received ; to see such jealousy, such alarm ; and, at the last, so great incredulity or indifference, that near as Bethlehem was, and interesting as was the object of their visit to it, there were none among those inhabitants of Jerusalem who cared to accompany them. Was there nothing here to awaken doubt—for such faith as theirs to stagger at ? Might they not have been deceived ? Perhaps it was a delusion they had listened to—a deceitful appearance they had seen in their own land. Had these Magi been men of a weak faith or an intemperate purpose, they might, instead of going on to Bethlehem, have gone forth



despondingly and distrustfully from Jerusalem, and taken their way back to their own homes. But strange and perplexing as all this is, it neither shakes their faith nor affects their conduct. They had good reason to believe that the communication at first made to them came to them from God, and once satisfied of this, no conduct on the part of others, however unaccountable or inconsistent, moves them away from the beginning of their confidence. Though all the dwellers in Jerusalem be troubled at tidings which should have been to them tidings of great joy; though not a Jew be ready to join them, or to bid them Godspeed ere they leave the city's gate, to Bethlehem they go.

But a new perplexity arises. Somewhere in that village the birth has taken place, but who shall tell them where? If the inhabitants of the capital knew and cared so little about the matter, what help will they get from the villagers at Bethlehem? They may require to search diligently, as Herod bade them, and yet, after all, the search may be vain. Just then, in the midst of their perplexity, the star which they had seen in the east once more shone out above their heads, to go before them till it stood over where the young child lay. No wonder that, when they saw that star, they rejoiced with an exceeding great joy. It dispelled all doubt, it relieved from all perplexity. When first they saw it, in the East, it wore the face of a stranger among old friends; now it wears the face of an old friend among strangers, and they hail it as we hail a friend we thought was lost, but who comes to us at the very time we need him most.

Let us note the contrast, as to the mode and measure of divine guidance given, between the Magi from the East and the shepherds of Bethlehem and the chief priests and scribes of Jerusalem. The shepherds were as sincere, perhaps more devout than the wise men; understanding better who and what the Messiah was to be, and longing more ardently for his coming; but they were uneducated men—men at least whose position and occupation prevented them from instituting independent inquiries of their own. They were left to find out nothing; to them a full revelation was at once given. Such minute information was furnished as to the time and place and circumstances of the birth, that they were enabled, with little or no inquiry, to proceed directly to the place where the young child lay. The Magi, on the other hand, were men of intelligence, education, wealth. They had the leisure, and they possessed all the means for prosecuting an independent research. To them no such full and minute directory of conduct was supplied. What they could not learn otherwise than by a divine revelation, was in that way commu-



nicated; but what they could learn by the use of ordinary means, they were left in that way to find out. They repair to, and they exhaust all the common sources of knowledge which lie open to them. They go to Jerusalem as to the likeliest place; they get there the information as to the place of the Lord's birth; they act upon the information thus obtained up to the farthest limit to which it can carry them. They tarry not in the unbelieving city, as many might have done, till further light was given them. They turn not the incredulity of others into a ground of doubt, nor the incompleteness of the intelligence afforded into a ground of discouragement and delay. They know now that somewhere in Bethlehem the object of their search is to be found, and if they fail in finding him, it will be in Bethlehem that the failure shall take place. Nor is it till they are on their way to that village, that the star of heavenly guidance once more appears; but then it does appear, and sends gladness into their hearts.

And have we not all, as followers of the Crucified, another and higher journey to perform; a journey not to the place of the Saviour's earthly birth, but that of his heavenly dwelling? And if, on that journey, we act as those men did, God will deal with us as he dealt with them. The path before us may be often hidden in obscurity; our lights may go out by the way; we may know as little of what the next stage is to reveal, as those men knew at Jerusalem what awaited them in their path to Bethlehem; but if, like them, we hold on our course, unmoved by the example of others; if we follow the light given us to the farthest point to which that light can carry us, then on us too, when lights all fail, and we seem about to be left in utter darkness, some star of heavenly guidance will arise, at sight of which we shall rejoice with an exceeding joy. Unto those that are thus upright, there shall arise light in the darkness; and to him that ordereth thus his conversation aright, God shall show his salvation.

But look now at the chief priests and scribes of the holy city, into whose hands the ancient oracles of God had been specially committed. They could tell at once, from the prophecies of Micah, the place of the Messiah's birth; and they could almost as readily and as accurately from the prophecies of Daniel have known the time of his advent. To them, as furnished already with sufficient means of information, no supernatural communication of any kind is made; to them no angel comes, no star appears, no sign is given. Had they but used aright the means already in their hands, they should have been waiting for the coming of the Lord, with ears all open to catch the first faint rumors which must have reached Jerusalem from a village not

more than six miles off, of what the shepherds saw and heard; they should have been out to Bethlehem before these Magi came, ready to welcome those visitors from a far country, and to conduct them into the presence of their new-born King. But they neglected, they abused the privileges they possessed; and now, as the proper fruit of their own doings, not only is the same kind of information supplied to others denied to them, but the very way in which they are first informed works disastrously, and excites hostile prejudices in their breast. "Where is he," these strangers say to them, "who is born King of the Jews?" Has an event like this occurred—occurred within a few miles of the metropolis—and they, the heads and rulers of the Jewish people, not know of it! For their first knowledge of it must they be indebted to these foreigners, men ignorant of Judea, unread in their sacred books! A star, forsooth, these men said, had appeared to them in the East; was it to be believed that for them, in their land of heathen darkness and superstition, such a fresh light should be kindled in the heavens, while to God's own appointed priesthood no discovery of any kind had been made? We discern thus in its very earliest stage, that antipathy to the son of Mary which, beginning in incredulity and fostered by pride, grew into malignant hatred, and issued in the nailing of Jesus to the cross. And even in the first stage of the course they followed, they appear before us reaping the fruit of their former doings, and sowing the seeds of their after crimes; for it is thus that the husbandry of wickedness goes on—the seed-time and the harvest, the sowing and the reaping going on together. What a singular spectacle does the proud and jealous priesthood of Judea thus present, learned in the letter of their own Scriptures, but wholly ignorant of their spirit; pointing the way to others, not taking a single step in it themselves; types of the nation they belonged to, of the function which the Jews have so largely since discharged—the openers of the door to Gentile inquirers, the closers of that door upon themselves.

We rejoin now the Magi at Bethlehem. They enter the indicated house, and stand before a mother and her child: a mother of very humble appearance; a child clad in simplest attire. Can this, they think, as they look around, be the roof beneath which infant royalty lies cradled! Can that be the child they have come so far to see and worship! Had they known all about that infant which we now know; had they known that an angelic choir had already sung his birth, lading the midnight breezes with a richer freight of melody than they had ever wafted through the skies; had they known that in that little hand which lay folded there in feebleness, in the gentle breath

which was heaving that infant bosom, the power of omnipotence lay slumbering—that at the touch of the one, the blind eye was to open and the tied tongue to be unloosed—that at the bidding of the other, the wildest elements of nature in their stormiest march were to stand still, devils were to be driven out from their usurped abodes, and the dead to come forth from the sepulchre; had they known that at the death of this Son of Mary the sun was to be darkened, the rocks were to be rent, and the graves to give up their old inhabitants—that he himself was to burst the barriers of the tomb, and rise in triumph, attended by an angel escort, to take his place at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens—we should not have wondered at the ready homage which they rendered to him. But they knew nothing of all this. What they did know we cannot tell. We only know that instantly, in absence of all outward warrant for the act, in spite of the most unpromising appearances, they bow the knee before that undistinguished infant, lower than it bent before the haughty Herod at Jerusalem; bow in adoration such as they never rendered to any earthly sovereign. And that act of worship over, they open their treasures and present to him their gifts: the gold, the frankincense, and the myrrh, the rarest products of the East; an offering such as any monarch might have had presented to him by the ambassadors from any foreign prince. When we take the whole course of these men's conduct into account; when we remember that they had none of the advantages of a Jewish birth or education, of an early acquaintance with the Jewish Scriptures; when we think of their starting on their long and perilous journey with no other object than the making of this single obeisance to the infant Redeemer of mankind; when we look at them standing unmoved amid all the discouragements of the Jewish metropolis; when we attend them on their solitary way to Bethlehem; when we stand by their side, as beneath that lowly roof they silently worship, and spread out their costly gifts—we cannot but regard their faith as in many of its features unparalleled in the gospel narrative; we cannot but place them in the front rank of that goodly company in whose acts the power and the triumph of a simple faith shine forth.

That single act of homage rendered, they return to their own country, and we hear of them no more. They come like spirits, casting no shadow before them; and like spirits they depart, passing away into that obscurity from which they had emerged. But our affection follows them to their native land—would fain penetrate the secret of their after lives and deaths. Did these men see and hear and know no more of Jesus? Were they living when—after thirty

years of profoundest silence, not a rumor of his name going anywhere abroad—tidings came at last of the words he spake, the deeds he did, the death he died? We would fain believe, so far, the quaint old legend of the middle ages, that connects itself with the fancied resting-place of their relics in the Cathedral of Cologne; we would fain believe that they lived to converse with one of the apostles of the Lord, and to receive Christian baptism at his hands. However it may have been, we can scarce believe that He whose star carried them from their eastern homes to Bethlehem, and whose Spirit prompted the worship they then rendered, left them to die in heathen ignorance and unbelief. Let us cherish rather the belief that they who bowed so reverently before the earthly cradle, are now worshipping with a profounder reverence before the heavenly throne.

But what special significance has this incident in the early life of our Redeemer? Why were these men summoned from their distant homes to come so far to pay that single act of homage to the infant Jesus, and then retire for ever from our sight? Why, but that even with the first weak beginnings of the Saviour's earthly life, there might be a foretokening of the wide embrace of that kingdom he came to establish; a first fulfilling of those ancient prophecies which had foretold that the Gentiles should come to this light, and kings to the brightness of its rising; that all they from Sheba should come, bringing gold and incense. These eastern Magi were the earliest ambassadors from heathen lands, the first shadowy precursors of that great company to be gathered in from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, to sit down with Abraham in the kingdom of the just. In these persons and in their act the Gentile world, of which they formed a part, gave an early welcome to the Redeemer, and hastened to lay its tribute at his feet. They were, in fact—and this should bind them the closer to our hearts—they were our representatives at Bethlehem, making for us Gentiles the first expression of our faith, the first offer of our allegiance. Let us rightly follow up what they did in our name. First, they worshipped, and then they gave the best and richest things they had. The gold, the frankincense, the myrrh had been of little worth had the worship of the heart not gone before and sanctified the gift. But the gift most appropriately followed the worship. First, then, let us give ourselves to the Lord, our heart the first oblation that we proffer; for the heart once given, the hand will neither be empty nor idle, nor will it grudge the richest thing that it can hold, nor the best service it can render.



## V.

THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS, AND THE FLIGHT  
INTO EGYPT.\*

THERE are three Herods who appear prominently in the pages of the New Testament. *First*, Herod the Great, the son of a crafty and wealthy Idumean or Edomite, who, during the reign of the last of the Asmonean princes, attained to great political influence in Judea, securing for his eldest son Phasael the governorship of Jerusalem; and for Herod, his younger son, the chief command in Galilee. Phasael was cut off in one of those political commotions which the raising of a foreign family to such an elevated position engendered; but Herod escaped all the perils to which he was thus exposed, distinguished himself by his address and bravery, showed great political foresight in allying himself closely with the power which he saw was to prevail in Judea as over all other lands, sought and won the personal friendship of Cassius and of Mark Antony, and, mainly by the influence of the latter, was proclaimed king of the Jews.

*Second*, Herod Antipas, a son of this first Herod, who, in that division of his father's kingdom which took place at his decease, became tetrarch of Galilee and Perea. This was the Herod who so often appears in the narrative of our Lord's ministry, who at first heard John the Baptist gladly, but who afterwards gave the order for his execution; who happened to be in Jerusalem at the time of Christ's trial and condemnation, and who was brought then into such singular contact with Jesus.

*Third*, Herod Agrippa, a grandson of the first Herod, though not a son of Herod Antipas, who was invested by the Romans with the royal dignity, and ruled over all the country which had been subject to his grandfather. This was the Herod who appears in the history of the Acts of the Apostles; who stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church; who killed James, the brother of John, with the sword; who, because he saw that it pleased the Jews, proceeded to take Peter also; and whose awful death so soon afterwards at Caesarea St. Luke has so impressively recorded.

Our Saviour, we know, was born near the end of the long reign of the first of these Herods; and the latest and most successful investigations of the chronology of Christ's life have taught us to believe that it was in the last year of Herod's reign, and close upon that



monarch's last illness and death, that the birth at Bethlehem took place. The terrible malady which made his closing scene not less awful than that of his grandson Agrippa had already begun its work, and given forewarning of the fatal issue. He was in a moody, suspicious, vengeful state of feeling. His reign had long been outwardly brilliant and prosperous. He had defeated all the schemes of his political opponents. With a firm and cruel hand, he had kept down all attempts at intestine revolt. By a large remission of taxation, by extraordinary liberality in times of famine, by lavish expenditure on public works, the erection of new cities and the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem, he had sought to dazzle the public eye and win the public favor. But nothing could quench the Jewish suspicion of him as an Edomite. This suspicion fed upon his attempts to introduce and encourage heathen games and pastimes, and grew intensely bitter as it watched with what unremitting hate he persecuted and cut off all the members of that Maccabean family whose throne he had usurped, around whom Jewish gratitude and hope still fondly clung. This ill-concealed enmity preyed upon the proud, dark spirit of Herod. It taught him to see his deadliest foes in the bosom of his own family. Passionately attached to her, he had married the beautiful but ill-fated Mariamne, the daughter of Alexander, one of the Asmonean princes. She inherited the pride and ambition of her family; bitterly resenting, as well she might, the secret order which she discovered Herod had issued, that she should be cut off if he failed to secure the throne for himself in the embassy to Rome which he undertook after the defeat of Mark Antony, his first patron. Her resentment of this order had the worst interpretation put upon it, and in the transport of a jealousy in which both personal and political elements were combined, Herod ordered her to be beheaded. Then followed those transports of remorse which, for a time, bereft the frantic prince of reason. Mariamne gone, the father's jealousy was directed to his two sons by her, in whose veins the hated Asmonean blood was flowing. He sent for Antipater, his son by the wife he had divorced in order to marry Mariamne, and set him up as their rival and his successor. But the popular favor clung to Alexander and Aristobulus, the sons of the murdered Mariamne. Herod's court and family became a constant gloomy scene of dissension and distrust. Charges of treasonable designs on the part of Alexander and Aristobulus against his person and government were secretly poured into the ear of Herod. Men of inferior rank, supposed to be implicated, were seized, tortured, and executed, till at last, by their father's own order the two young princes, then in the flower of their early

manhood, were strangled. Antipater had been the chief instrument in urging Herod on to this inhuman deed, and now in that very son whom he had done so much for he found the last worst object of his jealous wrath. Antipater was proved to have conspired to poison his old, doting, diseased, and dying father. He was summoned to Jerusalem. Herod raised himself from his bed of suffering, and gave the order for his execution. His own death drew on. It maddened him to think that there would be none to mourn for him; that at his death there would be a general jubilee. The fiendish idea seized him, that if there were none who voluntarily would weep for him, there should at least be plenty of tears shed at his death; and so his last command—a command happily not executed—was, that the heads of all the chief families in Judea should be assembled in the Hippodrome, and that as soon as it was known that he had drawn his last breath they should be mercilessly slaughtered; and thus, his body consumed by inward ulcers and his spirit with tormenting passions, Herod died.

I have recited thus much of this king's history, that you may see in what harmony with his other doings was his massacre of the innocents at Bethlehem. When he heard of the coming of the Magi and of the birth of this new King of the Jews, the sceptre was already dropping from his aged and trembling hands.\* But as the dying hand of avarice clutches its gold the firmer as it feels the hour draw on when it must give it up, so did the dying hand of ambition clutch the sceptre, and he determined that if he could hold it no longer, he would at least try to cut off all who might claim to wield it at his death. A lifetime's practice had made him a proficient in craft. He inquired privily of the wise men as to the time at which the star appeared. Had he even then, when he made this inquiry, matured his bloody project; and did he wish, by knowing the precise time of the star's appearance, to assure himself of the exact age of the child he intended to destroy; or was the inquiry made for the purpose of ascertaining whether any like star had been seen anywhere in Judea, seeking thus to confirm or invalidate what the wise men said? This only we can say, that if it were but a few days after the birth of Jesus that the Magi visited Jerusalem, and if the order that Herod afterwards issued to his executioners was founded on the information given him as to the time of the star's appearance, then the first appearance of the star must have been coincident, not with the birth of Jesus, but with the annunciation of that birth to Mary. Herod may have fancied from what he learned from the Magi that the child

\* He was seventy years old when he died.

must now be about a year old, and giving a broad margin that no chance of escape might be given, his order ran that all under two years of age should be destroyed.

Perhaps, however, Herod's only object in his first private interview with the Magi was to extract from them all the information he could, with no precise or definite purpose as to how he should act upon the information so obtained. When he told them to go and search diligently for the child, and when they had found him, to come and bring him word, it was not with any purpose on his part to go and worship him; in saying that he meant to do so, we may well believe him to have been playing the hypocrite; but neither may it have been with an already fixed resolution to act as he afterwards did. But the wise men did not return; he ascertained that they had been in Bethlehem, that they had left that place, that without coming to see him and report as to the result of their search, they were already beyond his reach on their way back to their distant home. The birth was, by this very circumstance, made all the surer in his eyes, and to his natural alarm at such a birth, there was now added bitter chagrin at being mocked in this way by these strangers. Had they seen through the mask which he imagined he had fashioned so artfully and worn so well? Nothing galls the crafty more than when their craft is discovered, and the discovery is turned against themselves. Angry with the men who had treated him thus, Herod is angry, too, with himself for having given them the opportunity to outwit him. Why had he not sent some of his own trusty servants with them to Bethlehem? Why had he been so foolish as to trust these foreigners? Irritated at them, irritated at himself, determined that this child shall not escape, he sends his bandits out upon their bloody errand.

That errand was to be quickly and stealthily executed. In so small a village as Bethlehem, and in the thinly scattered population which lay around it, there could be but a few male infants under two years old. It is but one of the dreams of the middle-age imagination which has swelled the numbers of the slaughtered to thousands; one or two dozens would be nearer to the mark. A few practised hands such as Herod could easily secure would have little difficulty in finishing their work in the course of one forenoon. It was spring-time of the year;\* the parents were busy in the fields; the unprotected homes lay open. Before any concerted resistance could be offered, half the children might be slain. Every precaution, we

\* It has been accurately ascertained that Herod must have died between the 13th March and the 4th April, 750 A. U. C.





THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT



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may believe, was taken by Herod that it should not be known at whose instance the deed was done. He was too wily a politician to make any such public manifestation of his vindictive alarm as his sending forth a company of executioners, clothed visibly with the royal authority, would have made. But secretly, promptly, vigorously as his measures were taken, they came too late. When told that not a male child of the specified age had been permitted to escape, he may have secretly congratulated himself on that peril to his government being thus summarily set aside. But an eye more vigilant than his was watching over the safety of the infant Jesus. In a dream of the night the angel of the Lord had appeared to Joseph; told him of the impending peril, and specially directed him as to the manner of escape. Without an hour's delay, the warning given was acted on. The journey from Bethlehem to the nearest part of Egypt was soon performed, and secured from the stroke of Herod's bandits and placed beyond the after-reach of Herod's wrath, the child was safe. The flight was hasty, and the sojourn in Egypt was but short.\* The way for the return was open, and in fulfilment of his promise, the angel came to Joseph to tell him that they were dead who sought the young child's life. Struck by all the circumstances which had accompanied the birth there, Joseph and Mary had perhaps resolved to take up their residence in Bethlehem. But on entering Judea they heard that though Herod was dead, his son Archelaus ruled in his stead; a prince who early proved that the spirit of his father had descended on him, one of the first acts of his reign being the slaughter of three thousand of his countrymen in Jerusalem. The apprehensions of Joseph were verified by the angel's once more appearing to him in a dream, and directing him to pass on through Judea, and take up his abode again in Nazareth, a hamlet in the province of Galilee.

In the narrative of this passage of our Lord's infant life as given by St. Matthew, two things strike us.

1. The prominent part assigned to, and assumed by Joseph as the earthly guardian of the child; the frequency, the minuteness, and the manner in which these divine intimations were made to him on which he acted. In every instance it was in a dream of the night that the heavenly warning came. Nor was the warning in any instance vague, but remarkably definite and satisfactory. He was told at first not

\* Accepting either the close of the year 749 A. V. C. or the beginning of 750 A. V. C. as the most probable date of the birth of Christ, and assuming that the visit of the Magi succeeded the presentation in the temple, the stay in Egypt could have been but short.

simply that danger was at hand; he was told specifically what that danger was: "Herod will seek the young child to destroy him." He was told not simply to escape from Bethlehem, but to flee into Egypt; of Herod's death he got timely information, and while hesitating as to what he should do on his return into Judea, he had his doubts removed and his fears allayed by another divine direction. Are we wrong in interpreting the heavenly messenger's manner of acting towards the foster-parent of our Saviour as indicative of a very watchful and tender solicitude on Joseph's part for the safety of that strange child to whom he was united by so strange a tie? He appears as the heaven-appointed, heaven-instructed sentinel, set to watch over the infant days of the Son of the Highest, chosen for this office, and aided in its discharge, not without such regard to his personal qualifications as is ordinarily shown under the divine government in the selection of fit agents for each part of the earthly work. We are led thus to think of him as taking an almost more than paternal interest in the babe committed to his care, thinking about him so much and so anxiously by day that his dreams by night are of him, and that it is in these dreams the angel comes to give the needed guidance, and to seal, as it were, by the divine approval the watchful care by which the dreams had been begotten. And we are the more disposed to think thus favorably of Joseph as we reflect upon the peculiar relationship in which he stood to Jesus, and remember that this is the only glimpse we get of the manner in which the duties of that relationship were discharged. In the record of our Lord's ministry he never appears. The conclusion seems natural that he had died before that ministry began. It is only in his connection with the birth and infancy and childhood of Jesus that any sight of Joseph is obtained, and it pleases us to think that he who was honored to be the guardian of that sacred life in the first great peril to which it was exposed, was one not unworthy of the trust, but who lovingly, faithfully, tenderly executed it.

2. In reading this portion of the gospel of St. Matthew, we are struck with the frequent references to the history and prophecies of the Old Testament. Such references are peculiar to St. Matthew, and they are due to the character of those to whom his gospel was especially addressed, and to the object he had especially in view. His gospel was written for converted Jews, and his great aim was to present to such Jesus Christ as the Messiah promised to their fathers. Continually, therefore, throughout his narrative, as almost nowhere in the narratives of the other evangelists, he quotes from the Old Testament Scriptures with the view of showing how accurately and

completely they were fulfilled in the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. The very formula, "that it might be fulfilled," is peculiar to the first gospel. The method thus followed by St. Matthew was admirably fitted to soothe the prejudices of Jewish converts, and establish them in a true faith in Christ. Thus it is that in the passage now before us, he attempts to obviate objections that might naturally arise in Jewish minds, on their being told of such events—to them so untoward and unlooked for—in the life of the infant Messiah as his being forced to find a temporary retreat in the land of Egypt, the slaughter of so many infants on his account, and the fixing of his abode in a remote hamlet of Galilee. Nothing could be more calculated to allay any prejudice created by the recital of such incidents than to point to parallel or analogous ones in the history of ancient Israel. The three citations of this kind which St. Matthew makes differ somewhat in their character. Of only one of them is it certain that there was a literal fulfilment of a prophecy uttered with immediate and direct reference to Christ. He came and dwelt, it is said, in Nazareth, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene." Yet it is singular that this prophecy, which was obviously one spoken directly of the Messiah, is nowhere to be found in the Old Testament Scriptures as they now are in our hands. But this hinders not our belief that by some one or other of the ancient prophets the words that St. Matthew quotes had been spoken. As Jude recites and verifies a prophecy of Enoch of which otherwise we should have been ignorant, as St. Paul reports a saying of our Lord which otherwise should not have been preserved, so St. Matthew here records a prophecy which but for his citation of it would have perished.

It is different, however, with the other two citations from ancient prophecy. These we can readily lay our hands upon, and in doing so become convinced that St. Matthew did not and could not mean to assert that in the events which he related they had directly and literally been verified. His object was rather to declare—and that was sufficient—that the incidents to which those old prophecies did in the first instance refer, were not only kindred in character, but were typical or symbolically prophetic of those which he was describing in the life of Jesus. He quotes thus a part of that verse in the 11th chapter of Hosea which runs thus: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." If that ancient Israel of which the Lord said, "He is my son," "He is my first-born," while yet he was as it were but an infant, was carried down into and thereafter brought safe out of Egypt, was it a strange thing



that He who was Jehovah's own and only Son, the First-born among many brethren, of whom and of whose church that Israel was a type, should in his infancy have to pass through a like ordeal of persecution and of deliverance? The point of the fulfilment of the prophecy here alleged does not lie in Hosea's having Christ actually and personally in his eye when he penned the words quoted by St. Matthew, but in the fact related by Hosea having a typical reference to a like fact in that after history which stands shadowed forth throughout in the outward history of ancient Israel.

It is in the same way that we are to understand the quotation from the 31st chapter of the prophecies of Jeremiah. It is in direct connection with his statement of the fact that Herod sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, from two years old and under, that St. Matthew says, "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet." "Matthew," says Calvin, "does not mean that the prophet had predicted what Herod should do, but that at the advent of Christ that mourning was renewed which many ages before the children of Benjamin had made." Primarily the words of the prophet referred to the carrying away of a large portion of the tribes of Benjamin and Judah captives to Babylon. In describing the bitter grief with which the heart of the country was then smitten, Jeremiah, by a figure as bold as it is picturesque and impressive, summons the long-buried Rachel, the mother of Benjamin, from her grave, representing her as roused from the sleep of ages to bewail the captivity of her children. But Rachel's grave lay near to Bethlehem, and now another bitter woe had come upon the land in the murder of those innocents in that village; and what more natural than that St. Matthew should revive, re-appropriate, and re-apply that image of Jeremiah, representing Rachel as anew issuing from her tomb to weep over these her slaughtered children.

But there was something more here than a mere apposite application to a scene of recent sorrow of a poetical image that originally referred to the grief caused by the captivity. That very grief which filled the land of Judah may have been intended to prefigure the lamentation that now filled Bethlehem and all its borders. Rachel rising from her tomb, and filling the air then with her lamentations, may have been meant to stand as a type or representative of these mothers of Bethlehem, all torn in heart by the snatching of their little ones from their struggling arms and the killing of them before their eyes. If it be so, then that passage in Jeremiah speaks of something more than of the mere suffering inflicted and the sorrow it produced. The weeping Rachel is not suffered to weep on, to weep out

her grief. There are words of comfort for her in her tears. There is a message from the Lord to her that speaks in no ambiguous terms of the after destiny, the future restoration of those children so rudely torn from their maternal embrace. For what are the words which immediately follow those which St. Matthew has quoted: "Thus saith the Lord, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border." If we have any right to apply this part of the prophecy to this incident of the evangelic history, then may we take the words that I have quoted as carrying with them the assurance that those children who perished under the stroke of Herod's hirelings died not spiritually; that they shall come again from the land of the last enemy, come again with Him whose birth was so mysteriously connected with their death. We know that those infants, whose ghastly remains the weeping mothers gathered up to lay in their untimely graves, shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. To them that resurrection, itself a fruit of the Saviour's advent, must come as a boon, a benefit, not as a bane or curse. They will rise to eternal life. To believe otherwise of them, and of all who die in infancy, would be to believe that those who are called away from this world while yet the first dewdrops of life are on them, are placed thereby in a worse condition than that in which it is the declared purpose of the gospel to place all mankind. It is a belief which we cannot adopt. Our assurance is clear, and, as we think, well grounded—though these grounds we cannot now pause to unfold—that all who die in infancy are saved. Distinguished among them all, let us believe this of those slaughtered babes of Bethlehem. Their fate was singularly wrapped up with that of the infant Saviour. The stroke that fell on them was meant for him; the sword of persecution which swept so mercilessly in many an after age through the ranks of Christ's little ones was first reddened in their blood. The earliest victims to hatred of the Nazarene—if not consciously and willingly, yet actually dying for him—let us count them as the first martyrs for Jesus, and let us believe that in them the truth of the martyrs' motto was first made good, "Near to the sword, near to God." "O blessed infants!" exclaims Augustine; "He who at his birth had angels to proclaim him, the heavens to testify, and Magi to worship him, could surely have prevented that these should have died for him, had he not known that they died not in that death, but rather lived in higher bliss."

## VI.

THE THIRTY YEARS AT NAZARETH—CHRIST AMONG  
THE DOCTORS.\*

UP among the hills of Galilee, in a basin surrounded by swelling eminences, which shut it in on every side, lies the little village of Nazareth. Its name does not occur in Old Testament history. Josephus never mentions it, though he speaks of places lying all around it. Its inhabitants were not worse than their neighbors, nor exposed on account of their character to any particular contempt, yet Nathanael, himself a Galilean, could say, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" so small and insignificant was the place. It was here, as in a fit retreat, that the childhood, youth, and early manhood of our Lord passed quietly and unnoticed away. Those thirty years of the life of the Son of God upon this earth, how deeply hidden from us do they lie! how profound the silence regarding them which the sacred writers preserve! a silence all the more remarkable when we consider how natural and strong is our desire to know something, to be told something of the earlier days of any one who, at some after period of his life, has risen to distinction. But all that here is told us of the first twelve years of our Saviour's life is that the child grew, waxed strong in spirit, was filled with wisdom, and that the grace of God was upon him. Had any of those wonders which attended his birth been renewed, had any thing supernatural occurred in the course of those years, we may presume it would have been related or alluded to. Nothing of that kind we may infer did happen. Outwardly and inwardly the growth of Jesus under Mary's care at Nazareth, obeyed the common laws under which human infancy and childhood are developed. Beyond that gentle patience which nothing could ruffle, that simple truthfulness which nothing could turn aside; beyond that love which was always ready to give back smile for smile to Mary and the rest around, and to go forth rejoicingly on its little errands of kindness within the home of the carpenter; beyond that wisdom which, wonderful as it was, was childlike wisdom still, growing as his years grew, and deriving its increase from all the common sources which lay open to it; beyond the charm of all the graces of childhood in their full beauty and in their unsullied perfection—there was nothing externally to distinguish his first twelve years. So we conclude from the absence of all notices of them in the

\* Luke 2 : 40-52.

gospel narrative. Of the void thus left, however, the Christian church became early impatient. Many attempts were made to fill it up. In the course of the first four centuries numerous pseudo-gospels were in circulation, a long list of which has been made up out of references to them which occur in the preserved writings of that period.\* Some of these apocryphal gospels are still extant, two of them entitled the Gospel of the Infancy; and it is very curious to notice how those succeeded who tried to lift the veil which covers the earlier years of Christ. One almost feels grateful that such early attempts were made to fill up the blank which the four Evangelists have left.† They enable us to contrast the simplicity, and naturalness and consistency of all that the Evangelists have recorded of Christ, with such empty and unmeaning tales. They do more. These apocryphal gospels were written by men who wished to honor Christ in all they said about him; by men who had that portraiture of his character before them which the four gospels supply; and yet we find them narrating, as being in what seemed to them entire harmony with that character, that when boys interrupted Jesus in his play, or ran against him in the street of the village, he looked upon them and denounced them, and they fell down and died. It was said, I believe by Rousseau, that the conception and delineation of such a character as that of the man Christ Jesus, by such men as the fishermen of Galilee, would have been a greater miracle than the actual existence of such a man. In these apocryphal gospels we have a singular confirmation of that saying; we have the proof that men better taught, many of them, than the apostles, even when they had the full delineation of the

\* See Jones on the Canon.

† These Gospels of the Infancy of our Lord are full of miracles of the most frivolous description, miracles represented as wrought first by the simple presence of the infant, by the clothes he wore, the water in which he was washed, wrought afterwards by the Son of Mary himself as he grew up at Nazareth, many alleged incidents of his boyhood there being gravely related: as when we are told that he and the other children of the village went out to play together, busying themselves in making clay into the shapes of various birds and beasts, whereupon Jesus commanded his beasts to walk, his birds to fly, and so excelled them all; or again, when we are told that passing by a dyer's shop he saw many pieces of cloth laid out to be dyed, all of which he took and flung into a neighboring furnace, throwing the poor owner of the shop into an agony of consternation and grief, and then pleasantly relieving him by drawing all the pieces out of the furnace each one now of the very color which had been desired. Such are the specimens, chosen chiefly because they are the least absurd of the many which are recorded in these gospels. It was thus, as these writers would exhibit it, that the early boyhood of our Lord was spent; it was by miracles such as those which I have recited, that he even then distinguished himself.



manhood of Jesus in their hands, could not attempt a fancy sketch of his childhood without not only violating our sense of propriety, by attributing to him the most puerile and unmeaning displays of divine power, but shocking our moral sense, and falsifying the very picture they had before their eyes, by attributing to him acts of vengeance.

Joseph and Mary "went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover." The Mosaic law required that all the male inhabitants of Judea should go up three times yearly to the capital, to keep the three great festivals of the Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. A later Rabbinical authority had laid an injunction upon women to attend the feast of the Passover. Living as they did in so remote a part of the country, it is probable that the parents of our Lord satisfied themselves with going up together once yearly to Jerusalem; Joseph thus doing less, and Mary more than the old law enjoined. When Jesus was twelve years old, Joseph and Mary took him up with them to Jerusalem. He had then reached that age, when, according to Jewish reckoning, he crossed the line which divides childhood from youth, got the new name of a son of the Lord, and had he been destined to any public office, would have passed into the hands of the Rabbis for the higher instructions which their schools supplied. Jesus, however, had received no other instruction than the village school, attached to the synagogue at Nazareth, had supplied, and was destined to no higher employment than that of the trade his father followed. The purpose of Joseph and Mary in taking him up with them to Jerusalem was not that he might be placed at the feet of Gamaliel, or any other of the great distinguished teachers of the metropolis, but simply that he might see the holy city, and take part with them in the sacred services of the Passover.

There a new world opened to the boy's wondering eyes. With what interest must he have looked around, when first he trod the courts of the temple, and gazed upon the ministering priests, the altar with its bleeding sacrifice and rising incense, the holy place, and the secret shrine that lay behind the veil. The places, too, of which we shall have to speak immediately, where youths of his own age were to be found, would not be left unvisited. What thoughts were stirred within his breast by all these sights, it becomes us not even to attempt to imagine. The key is not in our hands with which we might unlock the mysteries of his humanity at this stage of its development. He has himself so far unveiled his thoughts and feelings as to teach us how natural it was that he should linger in the holy city, and under the power of a new attraction feel for a day or two as

if the ties that bound him to Nazareth and to his home there were broken.

The seven days of the feast went by. It had been a crowded procession from Galilee which Joseph and Mary had joined. Galilee was then, as Josephus informs us, very thickly populated, studded with no less than two hundred and forty towns, containing each fifteen thousand inhabitants or more, sending forth in the war with the Romans an army of no less than one hundred thousand men. The separate companies which this crowded population sent up at the Passover time to Jerusalem would each be large, and as the youths of the company consorted and slept near one another in the course of the journey, it is the less surprising that, on leaving Jerusalem to return to Nazareth, Joseph and Mary should not during the day have missed their son, who had stayed behind, nor have become aware of his absence till they sought for him among his companions when they rested for the night. The discovery was a peculiarly distressing one. What if some oversight had been committed by them? if they had failed to tell their son of the time of the departure, if they had failed to notice whether he was among the other youths before they left the city? They had such confidence in that child, who never before in a single instance had done any thing to create anxiety or distrust; they were so sure that he would be where, as they thought, he ought to be, that they had scarcely felt perhaps an ordinary degree of parental solicitude. And where could he now be; what could have happened to him? Their eager inquiries would probably soon satisfy them that he had not fallen aside by the way, that he had never joined the returning travellers, that he must have remained behind in Jerusalem. But with whom? for what? He knew no friends there with whom to stay. Had some accident befallen him? was he detained against his will? Did any one at Jerusalem know the secrets of his birth; were there any there who still sought the young child's life? Herod was dead; Archelaus was banished; the parents themselves had not been in Jerusalem since the time they had presented the infant in the temple. It was not likely they should be recognized; none of their friends at Nazareth knew about the mysteries of the conception and the birth. They had thought there was no risk in taking Jesus with them, but now their hearts are full of dark forebodings; some one may have known, may have told; some secret design may still have been cherished. Where was their child, and what had happened to him?

You may imagine what a night of sleepless anxiety followed their discovery at the first nightly resting-place of the caravan. Midday

saw them back in the city. It is said to have been after three days' search they found him; if we count the day of their return as one of these three, there would still be one entire day's fruitless search. There may have been two such days—days of eager inquiry everywhere throughout the city, in the house where they had lived, among all those with whom they had had any converse or connection. At last they find the lost one, not in the courts of the temple, not in any of those parts of the edifice consecrated to public worship, but in one of those apartments in the outer buildings used as a school of the Rabbis. Among the Jews at this period, each synagogue had a schoolroom attached to it, in which the rudiments of an ordinary education were taught. Besides, however, these schools for primary instruction, wherever there were ten men in a position to devote their whole time to this purpose, a room was built for them, in which they carried on their pupils in all the higher walks of the sacred learning of the Jews. These constituted the schools of the Rabbis, and formed an important instrument in the support and extension of that system of Rabbinism which, as Milman tells us, "became, after the ruin of the temple, and the extinction of public worship, a new bond of national union, and the great distinctive feature in the character of modern Judaism." There were three apartments employed in this way attached to the temple. It was in one of these that Joseph and Mary found their son. He was sitting in the ordinary attitude, and engaged in the ordinary exercises of a pupil in the middle of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions—the Jewish method of education being chiefly catechetical—the pupil himself sometimes answering the questions put, and astonishing his hearers with his wisdom. When this strange, plain-looking, bright-looking, solemn-looking Galilean boy first came in among them, was it the wisdom he then showed which drew the hearts of some of these Rabbis to him, and led them, as if anxious to gain a scholar who might turn out to be the chief ornament of their school, to take him in and treat him tenderly? Was it with them, in the room they occupied in the outer temple buildings, that the two nights in which Jesus was separated from his parents were spent? The tie, whatever it was, between him and them, is now destined to be broken, never to be renewed.

Joseph and Mary find him in the midst of them. Joseph is too much astonished to say any thing, nor is it likely that Mary spoke till he had gone with her apart; but now her burdened mother's heart finds utterance. "Son," she says to him, "why hast thou thus dealt with us?" words of reproach that were new to Mary's lips. Never before had she to chide that child. Never before had he done





CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE WITH THE DOCTORS



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any thing to require such chiding. But now, when it appears that no accident had happened, no restraint had been exercised, that it had been of his own free will that Jesus had parted from his parents, and was sitting so absorbed by other persons and with other things, she cannot account for such conduct on his part. It looks like neglect, and worse; like indifference to the pain which he must have known this separation would cost them. "Son," she says, "why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing."

Innocently, artlessly, childishly, in words which, though not meant to meet the reproach with a rebuke, yet carried with them much of the meaning and effect of the words spoken afterwards at the marriage-feast at Cana, Jesus answers, "How is it that ye sought me? could you, Mary, believe that I would act under other than heavenly guidance; could you allow the idea of my being liable to any risk or danger simply because I was not under your eye and care; do you not know, were you not told whose Son I truly am; and should not that knowledge have kept you from seeking and sorrowing as you have done; wist you not, that wherever I was I must have been still beneath that Father's eye and care—whatever I was about, I must have been about that Father's business? Mary, you have called me Son, and I acknowledge the relationship; you have called Joseph my father; that relationship I disown; my own, my only Father is He in whose house you have now found me, whose will I came on earth to do; about whose matters I must constantly, and shall now henceforth and for ever be engaged."

It is in this consciousness of his peculiar relationship to God, now for the first time, perhaps, fully realized, that we catch the true meaning, and can discern something of the purpose of this early, only recorded incident in the history of our Lord's youth. Mary, we are told, understood not the answer of her son. With the knowledge that she possessed, we can scarcely imagine that she had any difficulty in at once perceiving that Jesus spake of his Father in heaven, and comprehending in so far at least the meaning of his words. But there may have been a special reason for Mary's surprise here—the difficulty she felt of comprehension and belief. It cannot readily be imagined that she had herself told her child during the first twelve years of his life, or that any one else had told him, of the mystery of his birth. From the first dawning of conscious intelligence, he must have been taught to call Joseph father, nor had it outwardly been communicated to him that he was only his reputed father, that he had no earthly parent, that his true and only father was God. If

that were the actual state of the connection between Mary and Jesus up to the time of this incident in the temple; if she had never breathed to him the great secret that he was none other than the Son of the Highest; if there had been nothing, as she knew there was not, in the quiet tenor of the life which for twelve years Jesus lived, to afford any outward indication or evidence, either to himself or others, of the nature of his Sonship to God—then how surprised must Mary have been when in the temple, and by that answer to her question, Jesus informed her that he knew all, knew whence he was, knew for what he came, knew that God was his Father in such a sense that the discharge of his business carried with it an obligation which, if the time and the season required, overbore all obligation to real or reputed earthly parents.

But whether it came upon Mary by surprise or not, was there no object in letting us and all believers in the Saviour know, as the record of this incident does, that Jesus was thus early and fully alive to the singularity of his relationship to God? Conceive that it had been otherwise; that these thirty years had been veiled in an impenetrable obscurity; that not one single glimpse had been given of how they passed away; that our first sight of the man Christ Jesus had been when he stood before John to be baptized in the waters of the Jordan, and to receive the Holy Ghost descending upon him. How natural in that case had been the impression that it was then for the first time, when the voice from heaven declared it, that he knew himself to be the Son of God; that it was then, when the Spirit first descended, that the Divine associated itself in close and ineffable union with the human. Then had those thirty years appeared in a quite different light to us; then had we conceived of him as living throughout their course the simple common life of a Galilean villager and craftsman. But now we know, and we have to thank this narrative of St. Luke for the information, that if not earlier, yet certainly at his twelfth year, the knowledge that he and the Father were one, that the Father was in him, and that he was in the Father, had visited and filled his spirit, had animated and regulated his life. With what a new sacredness and dignity do the eighteen years that intervened between this incident and that of his public manifestation to Israel become invested, and what new lessons of instruction do they bring us. At the bidding of a new impulse, excited within his youthful breast by this first visit to the temple, he breaks for a day or two all earthly bonds, and seems lost amid the shadows of the Sanctuary, absorbed in the higher things of Him who was worshipped there. But at the call of duty, his hour for public service, for speak-

ing, acting, suffering, dying, before all, and for all, not yet come, he yields at once to the desire of Joseph and Mary, and returns with them to Nazareth; becoming subject to them, burying, as it were, this great secret in his breast; consenting to wait, submitting to all the restraints of an ordinary household, putting himself once more under the yoke of parental authority, taking upon him all the common obligations of a son, a brother, a neighbor, a friend, a Galilean villager, a Jewish citizen; discharging all without a taint of sin; travelling not an inch beyond the routine of service expected in these relationships; doing absolutely nothing to betray the divinity that lay within, nothing to distinguish himself above others, or proclaim his heavenly birth; living so naturally, unostentatiously, undemonstratively, that neither did his brethren, the inmates of his home, his own nearest relatives believe in him, discerning not in all those years any marks of his divine prophetic character; his name so little known in the immediate neighborhood that Nathanael, who lived in Cana, a few miles off, had never heard of him, and was quite unprepared to believe Philip, when he told him, that in one Jesus of Nazareth he had found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write.

From the bosom of that thick darkness which covers the first thirty years of our Lord's earthly life, there thus shines forth the light which irradiates the whole period, and sheds over it a lustre brighter than ever graced the life of any other of the children of men. You may have wondered at this one event of his childhood being redeemed from oblivion, so insignificant does it seem, and at first sight so little correspondent with our preconceived conceptions of the great Messiah's character and work. Looking at Jesus as nothing more than the son of Joseph and Mary, there might be some difficulty in explaining his desertion of them at Jerusalem. But when you reflect on his self-recognition at this time as the Son of God; on his declaration of it to Mary; on his thenceforth acting on it in life; on his words in the temple, followed by eighteen years of self-denial, and gentle, cheerful, prompt obedience; on his growing consciousness of his divine lineage, and his earthly work and heavenly heritage; on the evils he came on earth to expose and remedy; on the selfishness, the worldliness, the formalism, the hypocrisy he detected all around him at Nazareth; when you reflect further on his divine reticence, on his sublime and patient self-restraint, on his refraining from all interference in public matters, and all exposure to public notice, on his devoting himself instead to the tasks of daily duty in a very humble sphere of life; when you reflect fixedly and thoughtfully



on these things, do you not feel that there rests on this portion of the life of Jesus, and upon its introductory and explanatory incident, an interest different indeed in kind, yet in full and perfect harmony with that belonging to the period when he stood forth as the Saviour of the world? If he came to empty himself of that glory which he had with the Father before the world was, to take upon him the form of a servant, to seek not his own glory, to do not his own will, not to be ministered unto but to minister, then assuredly it was not only during the three years of his public ministry, but during all the three-and-thirty years of his life on earth, that the ends of his mission were accomplished.

We think, I apprehend, too little of these quiet domestic years of secluded unpretending piety at Nazareth. Our eyes are dazzled by the outward glory which surrounded his path when he burst at last from his long concealment, and showed himself as the Son of the Highest; and yet there is a sense in which we should have more interest in the earlier than in the later period of his life. It is liker the life we have ourselves to lead. The Jesus of Nazareth is more of a pattern to us than the Jesus of Gethsemane and the cross. He was not less the Son of God in the one case than in the other; not less in the one character than in the other has he left us an example that we should follow his steps. It was thus the great lesson of his life at Nazareth, as interpreted by his sayings in the temple, that we should be doing our Father's business in the counting-house, in the workshop, at the desk, as much as in any of the higher or more public walks of Christian or philanthropic effort; that a life confined and devoted to the faithful execution of the simple, humble offices of daily domestic duty, if it be a life of faith and love, may be one as full of God, as truly divine and holy, as Christ-like and as honoring to Christ, as a life devoted to the most important public services that can be rendered to the church on earth. In the quiet and deep-lying valleys of life, all hidden from human eye, who may tell us how many there are, who, built up in a humble trust in Jesus, and animated by their hope in him, are performing cheerfully their daily tasks because a Father's wisdom has allotted them, and bearing patiently their daily burdens because they have been imposed by a Father's love? Content to live and labor, and endure and die, unnoticed and unknown, earthly fame hanging no wreath upon their tomb, earthly eloquence dumb over their dust, these are they, the last among men, who shall be among the first in the kingdom of the just.

## VII.

## THE FORERUNNER.\*

THE same angel who announced to Mary at Nazareth the birth of Jesus, had six months previously announced the birth of John to the aged priest Zacharias, as he ministered before the altar, within the temple at Jerusalem. Zacharias was informed that his wife Elisabeth should have a son, whose name was to be John, who was to be "great in the sight of the Lord," going before him "in the spirit and power of Elias, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Zacharias doubted what the angel said. At once as a punishment of his incredulity, and as a new token of the truth of the angelic message, he was struck with a temporary dumbness. When he came forth he could not tell his brother priests or the assembled people any thing about what he had seen or heard within. From the signs he made, and the strange awe-struck expression of his countenance, they fancied he had seen a vision; but it is not likely that he took any means of correcting whatever false ideas they entertained. His one wish was to get home and reveal the secret to his wife Elisabeth. His days of ministration lasted but a week, and as soon as they were over, he hastened to his residence in the hill country of Judea. In due time what Gabriel had foretold took place. The child was born. The eighth day, the day for its circumcision and the bestowing of its name, arrived. A large circle of relatives assembled. They proposed that the child should be called Zacharias, after his father. Foreseeing that some such proposal might be made, Zacharias had provided against any other name than that assigned by the angel being given to his son. Acting upon his instructions, Elisabeth interposed, and declared that the child's name should be John. The relatives remonstrated. None of her kindred, they reminded her, had ever borne that name. The dumb father was now by signs appealed to. He called for a writing-table, and wrote the few decisive words, "His name is John." They were all wondering at the prompt and peremptory settlement of this question, when another and greater ground of wonder was supplied: the tongue of the dumb was loosed, and, in rapt, rhythmical, prophetic strains that remind us forcibly of those in which, three months before, and in the same dwelling, Mary and Elisabeth had exchanged their greetings, he poured out fervent thanks to God for having visited and redeemed his people, and foretold the

\* Luke 1:1-18; Matt. 3:1-12; Mark 1:1-8.

high office which his own newborn son was to execute as Forerunner of the Messiah.

With that scene of the circumcision day the curtain drops upon the household of Zacharias and Elisabeth; nor is it lifted till many years are gone, and then it is the child only, now grown to manhood, who appears. His parents had been well stricken in years at the date of his birth, and as no mention of them is made afterwards, we may presume that, like Joseph, they were dead before any thing remarkable in the life of their son had happened. Little as we know of the first thirty years of the life of Jesus, we know still less of the like period in the life of John. All that we are told is that till the time of his showing unto Israel he was in the desert, in those wild and lonely regions which lay near his birthplace, skirting the north-western shores of the Dead sea. True to the angelic designation, accepting the vow that marked him as a Nazarite from his birth, John separated himself early from home and kindred, retired from the haunts of men, buried himself in the rocky solitudes of the wilderness, letting his hair grow till it fell loose and dishevelled over his shoulders, denying himself to all ordinary indulgences whether of food or dress, clothing himself with the roughest kind of garment he could get, a robe of hair-cloth, bound around him with a leathern girdle, satisfying himself by feeding on the locusts and wild honey of the desert. But it was not in a morose or ascetic spirit that he did so. He had not fled to those solitudes in chagrin, to nurse upon the lap of indolence regrets over bygone disappointments; nor had he sought there to shroud his spirit in a religious gloom deep as that of Engedi and Adullam, which may have been among his haunts. His whole appearance and bearing, words and actions, when at last he stood forth before the people, satisfy us that there was little in him of the mystic, the misanthrope, or the monk. Though dwelling apart from others, avoiding observation, and shunning promiscuous intercourse, he was not wasting those years in idleness, heedless of the task for the performance of which the life he led was intended, as we presume he must have been informed by his parents, to prepare him. Through the loopholes of retreat we can well imagine the Baptist as busily scanning the state of that community upon which he was to act. When he stepped forth from his retirement, and men of all kinds and classes gathered round him, he did not need any one to tell him who the Pharisees, or the Sadducees, or the publicans were, or what were their peculiar and distinctive errors. He appears from the first to have been well informed as to the state of things outside the desert. It may, in truth, in no small measure have

served to fit him for his peculiar work that—removed from all the influences which must have served, had he lived among them, to blunt his sense of surrounding evils, and to mould his character and habits according to the prevailing forms and fashions of Jewish life—he was carried by the Spirit into the desert to be trained and educated there, thence, as from a watch-tower, to look down upon those strange sights which his country was presenting, undistractedly to watch, profoundly to muse and meditate, the fervor of a true prophet of the Lord kindling and glowing into an intenser fire of holy zeal; till at last, when the hour for action came, he launched forth upon his brief earthly work with a swift impetuosity, like the rush of those short-lived cataracts, yet with a firmness of unbending will and purpose, like the stability of those rocky heights among which for thirty years he had been living.

But what had those thirty years in the current of Jewish history presented? At their beginning those intestine wars which previously had somewhat weakened the Roman power, had closed in the peaceful establishment of the empire under Augustus Cæsar. The dangers to Jewish liberty grew all the greater, and the impatience of the people under the Roman yoke became the more intense; the extreme patriot party, who were in favor with the people generally, became fanatic in their zeal. After the death of Herod the Great, while yet it remained uncertain whether Augustus would recognize the accession of Archelaus to the throne, an insurrection broke out in Jerusalem, which was only quelled by the slaughter of three thousand of the insurgents, and by the ill-omened stoppage of the great Passover festival. Augustus, unwilling to lay any heavier yoke on those who were already fretting beneath the one they bore, confirmed the will of Herod by which he divided his kingdom among his sons, suffered the Jews still to have nominally a government of their own, and recognized Archelaus as king over Judea and Samaria. His reign was a short and troubled one, and at its close Judea and Samaria were attached to Syria, made part of a Roman province, and had procurators or governors from Rome set over them, of whom the sixth in order was Pontius Pilate, who entered upon his office about the very time when the Baptist began his ministry. The lingering shadows of royalty and independence were thus removed. Not content with removing them, the usurper intermeddled with the ecclesiastical as well as the civil government of Judea. In the Mosaic Institute, the high priest, the most important public functionary of the Jews, attained his office hereditarily, and held it for life. The emperor now claimed and exercised the right of investiture, and appointed



and deposed as he pleased. During the period between the death of Herod and the destruction of Jerusalem, we read of twenty-eight high priests holding the office in succession, only one of whom retained it till his death. This dependence on Rome, not only for the appointment but for continuance in it, necessarily generated great servility on the part of aspirants to the office, and great abuses in the manner in which its duties were discharged. A supple, sagacious, venal man, like Annas, though not able to establish himself permanently in the chair, was able to secure it in turn for five of his sons, for his son-in-law Caiaphas, with whom he was associated at the time of the crucifixion, and afterwards for his grandson. Such a state of things among the governing authorities fomented the popular animosity to the foreign rule. The whole country was in a ferment. Popular outbreaks were constantly occurring. The public mind was in such an inflammable condition that any adventurer, daring enough and strong enough to raise the standard of revolt, was followed by multitudes. Among those insurrectionary chiefs, some of whom were of the lowest condition and the most worthless character, Judas of Galilee distinguished himself by his open proclamation of the principle that it was not lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar, and his political creed was adopted by thousands who had not the courage, as he had, to pay the penalty of their lives in acting it out. It can easily be imagined what a fresh hold their faith and hopes as to the foretold Messiah would take upon the hearts of a people thus galled and fretted to the uttermost by political discontent. The higher views of his character would naturally be swallowed up and lost in the conception of him as the great deliverer who was to break those hated bonds which bound them, restore the old Theocracy, and make Jerusalem, not Rome, the seat and centre of a universal monarchy.

Such was the state of public affairs and of the public feeling, when a voice, loud and thrilling like the voice of a trumpet, issues from the desert, saying, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Crowds come forth to listen; they look at the strange man, true son of the desert, from whose lips this voice cometh. He has all the aspect, he wears the dress of one of their old prophets. They ask about him; he is of the priestly order. Some old men begin now to remember about his father in the temple, and the strange "sayings that were noised abroad through all the hill country of Judea" soon after his birth. They listen to his words; it is true he does not directly claim divine authority; the old prophetic formula, "Thus saith the Lord," he does not employ; he points to no sign, he works

no miracle; he trusts to the simple power of the summons he makes, the prophecy he utters; yet there is something in the very manner of his utterance so prophet-like, that a prophet they cannot help believing him to be. There is nothing particularly ingratiating in his call to repent, but the announcement that the kingdom of heaven is at the door, and that they must all at once arise and prepare for it, meets the deepest, warmest wishes of their hearts. It is at hand at last, this strange man says—the kingdom for which they have so long been waiting; and shall they not go forth to welcome its approach and rejoice in its triumphs? The spell of the Baptist's preaching, in whatever it lay, was one that operated with a speed and a power and to an extent of which we have the parallel only in times of the greatest excitement, like those of the Crusades, or of the Reformation. "Then went out to him," we are told, "all Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." It would seem as if with one consent the entire population of the southern part of Palestine had gathered around the Baptist, and for the time were pliant in his hands. It may have facilitated their assemblage if, as has been conjectured, it was a Sabbatic year when John began his work, and the people, set free from their ordinary labors, were ready to follow him, as he led them to the banks of the Jordan to be baptized.

This baptism in the river was so marked a feature in the ministry of John, that it gave him his distinctive title, The Baptist. It was a new and peculiar rite; of Divine appointment, as appears not only from the question which our Lord put to the Jewish rulers, "The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?" but also from the declaration of John himself, "He that sent me to baptize with water." It may have been suggested by, as it was in some respects similar to, the various ablutions or washings with water prescribed in the Mosaic ritual; yet from all of these baptisms, if baptisms they could be called, it differed in many respects. They were all intended simply as instruments of purification from ceremonial defilement; it had another character and object. With a few exceptional cases, they were all performed by the person's own hands, who went through the process of purification; it was performed by another, by the hands of John himself, or some of his disciples. They were repeated as often as the defilement was renewed; it was administered only once. There was indeed one Jewish custom which, if then in use, presents a clear analogy to the baptism of John. When proselytes from heathenism were admitted into the pale of the Jewish commonwealth, after circumcision they were baptized. "They bring the

proselyte," says an old Jewish authority,\* "to baptism, and being placed in the water, they again instruct him in some weightier and in some lighter commands of the law, which being heard, he plunges himself and comes up, and behold he is an Israelite in all things." It would look as if the baptism of John was borrowed from this proselyte baptism of the Jews; but though it were, it will at once appear to you that the former rite had marked peculiarities of its own. And as it stood thus distinguished from all Jewish, so also did it stand distinguished from the Christian rite ordained by our Lord himself, which involved a fuller faith, symbolized a higher privilege, and was always administered in the name of Christ. The one rite might be regarded indeed as running into and being superseded by the other, but of the great difference between them we have proof in the fact that those who had received the baptism of John were nevertheless re-baptized on their admission into the Christian church.† John's baptism, like every thing about his ministry, was imperfect, preparatory, temporary, and transient, involving simply a confession of unworthiness, and a faith in one to come, through whom the remission of sins was to be conveyed.

The people who flocked around John readily submitted to his baptism, whether regarding it as altogether new, or the modified form of some of their own old observances. The accompaniment of his teaching with the administration of such an ordinance may have helped to reconcile the Pharisees, who were such lovers of the ritualistic, to a preaching which had little in itself to recommend it to them, as the absence on the other hand of all doctrinal instruction, all references to the unseen world, to angels and spirits, and the resurrection, may have helped to conciliate the prejudices of the Sadducees. At any rate, we learn that, borne along with the flowing tide, Pharisees and Sadducees did actually present themselves before John to claim baptism at his hands. His quick, keen, spiritual insight at once detected the veiled deceit that lay in their doing so, and in the very spirit which his great Master afterwards displayed, he proceeded to denounce their hypocrisy, giving them indeed the very title which Jesus bestowed on them. John's whole ministry, his teaching and baptizing, if it meant any thing, meant this, that without an inward spiritual change, without penitence, without reformation, no Israelite was prepared to enter into that kingdom whose advent he announced. His preaching was the preaching of repentance, his baptism the baptism of repentance; the one great lesson the whole involved, was that all Israel had become spiritually unfit

\* Maimonides.

† See Acts 19.

for welcoming the Messiah, and sharing the blessings of his reign. But here were some, the Pharisees and Sadducees who now stood before him, of whom he knew, that so far from entertaining the least idea that they required to go through any such process, they regarded themselves as preëminently the very ones to whom from their position in Israel this kingdom was at once to bring its blessings. Penetrating their secret thoughts, the Baptist said to them, "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father," and therefore are, simply as his descendants, entitled to all the benefits of that kingdom which is to be set up in Judea; "I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham;" a dim, yet not uncertain preintimation of the spiritual character and wide extension of the new kingdom of God; the possibility even of the outcast and down-trodden Gentiles being admitted into it.

John's bold and honest treatment of the Pharisees and Sadducees only made him look the more prophet-like in the eyes of the common people. It encouraged them to ask, "What shall we do then?" In a form of precept like to that which Christ frequently employed, John said to them, "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none. He that hath meat, let him do likewise." There is no better sign morally of a community than when such kindly links of brotherly sympathy so bind together all classes, as that those who have are ever ready to help those who want; as, on the other hand, there is no clearer proof of a community morally disorganized than the absence of this benevolent disposition. Judea was at this time, both as to its religious and political condition, thoroughly disorganized; and in inculcating in this direct and emphatic way the great duty of a universal charity, John was at once laying bare one of the sorest of existing evils, and pointing to the method of its cure.

Then came to him the publicans also, those Jews who for gain's sake had farmed the taxes imposed by the Romans; a class odious and despised, looked upon by their countrymen generally as traitors, who, by extortion, drew large profits out of the national degradation. They, too, got the answer exactly suited to them: "Exact no more than what is appointed to you." Then came to him soldiers, Jews we may believe who had enlisted under the Roman standard, and who not satisfied with the soldier's common pay abused their power as the military police of the country, and by force, or threat of accusation before the higher authorities, sought to improve their condition. They, too, got the answer suited to their case: "Do violence to no man: neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages." These are but a few stray specimens of the manner in



which the Baptist dealt with those who came to him: one quite new, yet so much needed. What power must have been exerted over a people so long accustomed to the inculcation of a mere ceremonial pietism, by this thoroughly intrepid, downright, plain, practical, unaccommodating and uncompromising kind of teaching. The great secret of its success lay here: that unsupported by any confirming signs from heaven—in a certain sense not needing them—he inculcated the duties of justice, truthfulness, forbearance, charity, by a direct appeal to the simple, naked sense of right and wrong that dwells in every human bosom. And the world has seldom seen a more striking proof of the power of conscience, and of the response which, when taken suddenly and before it has time to get warped and biased, conscience will give to all direct, sincere, and vigorous addresses to it, than when those multitudes from Judea and Jerusalem, and all the land, gathered round the Baptist on the banks of the Jordan.

What an animating spectacle must these banks have then exhibited; a spectacle which has ever since been annually renewed by the resort of thousands of pilgrims thither. Our last and best describer of Palestine\* brings it thus before our eyes: "No common spring or tank would meet the necessities of the multitudes. The Jordan now seemed to have met with its fit purpose. It was the one river of Palestine sacred in its recollections, abundant in its waters; and yet at the same time the river not of cities but of the wilderness, the scene of the preaching of those who dwelt not in king's palaces, nor wore soft clothing. On the banks of the rushing stream the multitudes gathered; the priests and scribes from Jerusalem, down the pass of Adummim; the publicans from Jericho on the south, and the lake of Gennesareth on the north; the soldiers on their way from Damascus to Petra, through the Ghor, in the war with the Arab chief Hareth; the peasants from Galilee, with One from Nazareth, through the opening of the plain of Esdraelon. The tall reeds or canes in the jungle waved, shaken by the wind; the pebbles of the bare clay hills lay around, to which the Baptist pointed as capable of being transformed into the children of Abraham; at their feet rushed the refreshing stream of the never-failing river."

This description, indeed, applies to a period in the narrative a little farther on than the one which is now immediately before us. The "One from Nazareth" may have left his village home, and been already on the way, but as yet he was buried in obscurity, deep hidden among the people. All the people were musing in their

\* Stanley.

hearts whether John were not himself the Christ. He knew what was in their hearts; he knew how ready they were to hail him as their promised deliverer. No man of his degree has ever had a fairer opportunity of lifting himself to high repute upon the shoulders of an acclaiming multitude. Did the tempting thought for a moment flit across his mind that he should seize upon the occasion so presented? If it did, he was in haste to expel the intruder, and prevent the multitude by at once proclaiming that he was not the great prophet they were ready to believe he was; that another was at hand much greater than he, to whom he was not worthy to discharge the lowest and most menial office of a slave, the carrying of his sandal, the unloosing of his shoe-latchet. He, John, baptized with water unto repentance, an incomplete and altogether preparatory affair; but the greater than he would baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

Such was the prompt and decisive manner in which he disowned all high pretensions. And when, shortly afterwards, posterior to our Lord's baptism, of which they may have heard nothing, a deputation from Jerusalem came down to ask him, "Who art thou?" he met the question with the emphatic negative, "I am not the Christ." "Art thou Elias then?" they said. John knew that the men who put this query to him were caring only about his person, and careless about his office—in the true spirit of all religious formalists, wanting so much to know who the teacher was, and but little heeding what his teaching meant; he knew that their idea was that the heavens were to give back Elias to the earth, and that he was to appear in person to announce and anoint the Messiah, and that many of them believed that besides Elias another of the old prophets was to arise from the dead, to dignify by his presence the great era of the Messiah's inauguration. Answering their questions according to the meaning of the questioners when they said, "Art thou Elias?" he said, "I am not;" when they asked him, "Art thou that prophet?" he answered, "No." And when still further they inquired, "Who art thou then, that we may give an answer to them that sent us?" he said, that he was but a voice and nothing more, "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias." Pressing him still farther by the interrogation, why it was that he baptized if he were neither Christ, nor Elias, nor that prophet; he speaks again of his own baptism as if it were too insignificant a matter for any question about his right to administer it being raised or answered, and of the greater than he already revealed to him by the sign from heaven: "I baptize with water, but there standeth one among you whom ye know not. He it is who coming after

me is preferred before me, whose shoe-latchet I am not worthy to unloose."

It is this prompt acknowledgment of his own infinite inferiority to Christ, his thorough appreciation of the relative position in which he stood to Jesus, the readiness with which he undertook the honorable but humble task of being but his herald, the unimpeachable fidelity and unfaltering steadiness with which he fulfilled the special course marked out for him by God, and above all the entire and apparently unconscious self-abnegation which in doing so he displayed, that shine forth as the prominent features in the personal character of the Baptist.

To these, particularly to the last, we shall have occasion hereafter to allude. Meanwhile, let us dwell a moment on the place and office which the ministry of John occupied midway between the old and the new economy. "The law and the prophets were until John." In him and with him they expired. He was a prophet, the only one among them all whose coming and whose office were themselves of old the subject of prophecy, honored above them all by the nearness of his standing to Jesus, by his being the friend of the Bridegroom, to whom it was given to hear the Bridegroom's living voice. But he was more than a prophet. Of the greatest of his predecessors, of Moses, of Elijah, of Daniel, it was true that they filled but a limited space in the great dispensation with which they were connected; their days but a handbreath in the broad cycle of events with which their lives and labors were wrapped up, the individuality of each, if not lost among, yet linked with that of a multitude of compeers. But John presents himself alone. The prophet of the desert, the forerunner of the Lord, appears without a coadjutor, a whole distinct economy in himself. To announce Christ's advent, to break up the way before Him, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord, this was the specific object of that economy which began and ended in John's ministry.

The kind, and amount of the service which the Baptist thus rendered, as well as the need of it, it is difficult for us now thoroughly to understand and appreciate. In what respect Christ would have been placed at a disadvantage had not John preceded him; in what respects the Baptist did open up the way before the Lord; in what respects John's ministry told upon the condition of the Jewish people, morally and spiritually, so as to make it different from what it otherwise would have been—so as to make the soil all the better prepared to receive the seed which the hand of the Divine sower scattered—it is not very easy for us to estimate. One thing is clear

enough, that it was John's hand which struck the first bold stroke at the root of the strong national prejudice which narrowed and carnalized the expected kingdom of their Messiah. It is quite possible, that, as to the true nature and extent of the coming kingdom, John may have been as much in the dark as the twelve apostles were till the day of Pentecost. One thing, however, was revealed to him in clearest light, and it was upon his knowledge of this that he spoke with such authority and power, that whatever the future kingdom was to be, it should be one in which force and fraud, and selfishness and insincerity, and all sham piety, were to be denied a place; for which those would stand best prepared who were readiest to confess and give up their sins, and to act justly and benevolently towards their fellow-men, humbly and sincerely towards their God. You have but the rudiments, indeed, of the true doctrine of repentance in the teaching of the Baptist—the Christian doctrine but in germ; but it is not difficult to see in it the same great lesson broached as to the inner and spiritual qualifications required of all the members of the kingdom of Christ, which was afterwards, with so much greater depth and fulness, unfolded privately to Nicodemus at the very beginning of our Lord's ministry in Judea, when he said to him: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;" and publicly to the multitudes on the hill-side of Galilee, when the Lord said to them: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

It would be quite wrong, it would indicate an ignorance of the peculiar service which the Baptist was called upon to render, were we to imagine that there must be a preparatory process of repentance and reformation gone through by each of us before we believe in Jesus, and by faith enter the kingdom. Our position is so different from that occupied by the multitude to whom John preached, that what was most suitable for them is not so suitable for us.

And yet not without some broad and general lessons for the church, at all times and in all ages, was it ordered so that the gentle preacher of peace should be preceded by the stern preacher of repentance; that John should be seen in the desert in advance of Jesus, in his appearance, his haunts, his habits, his words, his ordinance, proclaiming and symbolizing the duty and discipline of penitence. It was only thus, by the ministry of the one running into the ministry of the other, that the Christian life, in its acts of penitence, as well as in its acts of faith and love, could stand before us in vivid relief, embodied in a full-orbed and personal portraiture. Jesus had no sin of his own to mourn over, no evil dispositions to subdue, no evil



habits to relinquish. In the person, character, and life of Jesus, the great and needful duty of mortifying the body of sin and death could receive no visible illustration. He could supply to us no model or exemplar here. Was it not then wisely ordered that moving before, and for a time beside him, there should be seen that severer figure of the Baptist, as if to tell us that the proud spirit that is in us must be bowed, and the mountain-heights of pride in us be laid low, and the crooked things be made straight, and the rough places plain, to make way for the coming in of the Prince of Peace, and the setting up of his kingdom in our hearts; that we must go with the Baptist into the solitudes of the desert, as well as with the Saviour into the happy homes and villages of Galilee? Would you see, in its full, finished, and perfect form, the character and course of conduct, which, as followers of the Crucified, we are to aim at and to realize, go study it in the life of Jesus. But would you see it in its formation as well as in its finish, go study it in the life of the Baptist; put the two together, John and Jesus, and the portraiture is complete.

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## VIII.

### THE BAPTISM.\*

WE have no definite information as to the date of the commencement of John's ministry, or his own age at that time. As we know, however, that he was six months older than Jesus, as we are told that Jesus was about thirty years of age when he began his public ministry, and as that was the age fixed in the Jewish law for the priests entering on the duties of their office, it seems reasonable to conclude that the ministry of John had already lasted six months when Jesus presented himself before the Baptist on the banks of the Jordan. This would allow full time for intelligence of a movement which so rapidly pervaded the entire population of the southern districts of the country, penetrating Galilee, and reaching even to Nazareth. Moved by this intelligence, other Galileans of that district as well as Jesus may have followed the wake of the multitude, and directed their steps to the place where John was baptizing. In these circumstances Christ's departure from his home may not have created the surprise which it otherwise would have done. When Mary saw her son, who had hitherto so quietly and exclusively devoted himself to their discharge, throw up all his household duties and depart; when she learned

\* Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-23; John 1:30-33.

whither it was that his footsteps were tending, and gathered, as she may have done, from the tidings which were then afloat, that it was none other than the son of her relative Elisabeth who was shaking the entire community of the south by his summons to repent, and his proclamation of the nearness of the kingdom, she could scarcely have let Jesus go, for the first time that he had ever so parted from her, without following him with many wistful, wondering anxieties and hopes. But she did not know that he now left that home in Nazareth never but for a few days to return to it. Had she known it, could she have let him go alone? It was alone, however, and externally undistinguished among the crowd, that Jesus stood before John, and craved baptism at his hands. He did this in the simplest, least ostentatious way, allowing the great mass of the baptisms to be over, mingling with the people, and offering himself as one of the last to whom the rite was to be administered. "It came to pass," Luke tells us, that "when all the people were baptized," Jesus was baptized also. But his baptism did not go past as the others did. So soon as John's eye fell upon this new candidate for the ordinance, he saw in him one altogether different in person and character from any who had hitherto been baptized. He felt at once as if this administration of his baptism would be altogether out of place; that for Jesus to be baptized by him would be to invert the relationship in which he knew and felt that they stood to one another. By earnest speech or expressive gesture he intimated his unwillingness to comply with the request. The word which St. Matthew uses in telling us that John forbade him, is one indicative of a very strenuous refusal on his part. This refusal he accompanied with the words: "I have need to be baptized of thee; and comest thou to me!"

These words, you will particularly remark, were spoken at the commencement of their interview, before the baptism of our Lord, before that sign from heaven was given of which he had been forewarned, and for which he was to wait before pronouncing of any individual that he was the greater One who was to come, who was to baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Till he saw the Spirit descending and remaining, John could not know certainly, and had no warrant authoritatively to say that this was He of whom he spake. From the Baptist saying twice afterwards, "I knew him not," it has been imagined that up to this meeting John had never seen Jesus, had no personal acquaintance with his relative the son of Mary; and the distance at which they lived from one another, with the entire length of the land between them, the retired life of the One at Nazareth, and the dwelling of the other in the desert, have been referred

to as explaining the absence of all acquaintance and intercourse. That there could have been but little intercourse is clear; that they may never have seen each other till now is possible. But if so, how are we to explain John's meeting the proposal of Jesus with so instant and earnest a declaration, and saying to him, "I have need to be baptized of thee; and comest thou to me!" Jesus must either before these words were spoken have told John who he was, and the Baptist must have known from ordinary sources what a sinless and holy life he had been leading for these thirty years at Nazareth, or this knowledge must have been supernaturally communicated; for knowledge of Jesus to this extent at least, that he was no fit subject for a baptism which was for sinners, was obviously implied in this address.

Is it, however, so certain, or even so probable, that John and Jesus had never met till now? Zacharias and Elisabeth had to instruct their son as to his earthly work, his heavenly calling, and in doing so must have told him of the visit of Mary and the birth of Jesus. He must have learned from them enough to direct his eye longingly and expectantly to his Galilean relative as no other than the Messiah, for whose coming he was to prepare the people. True, he retired early to the desert, which was his place of ordinary residence till the time of his showing unto Israel, but did that imply that he never was at Jerusalem, never went up to the great yearly festivals? Jesus was once, at least, in Jerusalem in his youth, and may have been often there before his thirtieth year. So; too, may it have been with John, and if so, they must have met there, and become acquainted with one another. Much, however, as there may have been to lead John to the belief that Jesus was he that was to come after him, the lapse of those thirty years, during which the two had been almost totally separated, and the absence of all sign or token of the Messiahship during Christ's secluded life at Nazareth, may have led him to doubt. Even after he had received his great commission he might continue in the same state of uncertainty waiting, as he had been instructed, till the sign from heaven was given. Whatever John's inward surmises or convictions may have been, he must have felt that it became him neither to speak of them nor to act on them, till the promised and visible token of the Messiahship lighted on him whom he was then to hold forth to the people as the Lamb of God, who was to take away the sin of the world. Such we conceive to have been the state of John's mind and feelings towards Jesus when He presented himself before him for baptism. From previous acquaintance he may instantly have recognised him as the son of Mary, to whom his

thoughts and hopes had for so many years been pointing. He certainly did at once recognise him as his superior, as one at least so much holier than himself that he shrunk from baptizing Him. But he did not certainly know him as the Christ the Son of God; did not so know him at least as to be entitled to point him out as such to the people. When, some weeks afterwards, he actually did so, he was at pains to tell those whom he addressed that it was not upon the ground of any previous personal knowledge, or individual connection, that he spake of him as he did. "I knew him not," he said; "but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bear record that this is the Son of God."

We now know more of Jesus than perhaps John did when Christ stood before him to be baptized; we know that he was the Holy One of God, who had no sin of his own to confess, no pollution to wash away; and we too, like John, may wonder that the sinless Son of God should have submitted to such a baptism as his, a baptism accompanied with the acknowledgment of sin and the profession of repentance, and which was the symbol of the removal of the polluting stains of guilt. But our Lord's words fall upon our ears as they did on those of John: "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." Firmly yet gently, authoritatively yet courteously, clothing the command in the form of a request, he carries it over the reluctance and remonstrance of the Baptist. "Suffer it to be so now," for this once, so long as the present transient earthly relationship between us subsists. Suffer it, "for so it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." It is not then as a violator, but as a fulfiller of the law that Jesus comes to be baptized; not as one who confesses the want of such a perfect righteousness as might be presented for acceptance to God, but as one prepared to meet every requirement of his Father, and to render to it an exact and complete obedience. Who could speak thus, as if it were such an easy, as well as such a becoming thing in him to fulfil all righteousness, but the only begotten of the Father—he who, in coming into this world, could say, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God."

And here in subjecting himself to the baptism of John, you have the first instance of Christ's acting in his public official character as the Messiah. He steps forth at last from his long retirement, his deep seclusion at Nazareth, to appear how? to do what? To appear as an inferior before the Baptist, to ask a service at his hands, to enroll himself as one of his disciples; for this was the primary pur-



pose of this ordinance. It was the initiatory rite by which repentant Israelites enrolled themselves as the hopeful expectants of the coming kingdom; and He, the head of that kingdom, stoops to enroll himself in this way among them. "By one spirit," says the apostle, "we are all baptized into one body;" the outward baptism the sign or symbol of our incorporation into that one body the church. In the same way the Lord himself enters into that body, honors the ordinance which God had sent John to administer, conforms even to that preparatory and temporary economy through which his infant church was called to pass, putting himself under the law, making himself in all things like unto his brethren.

Still, however, the difficulty returns upon us as to what meaning such a rite as that of John's baptism could have in the case of Jesus; sin he had none to confess, nor penitence to feel, nor reformation to effect, nor a faith in the One to come to cherish. Yet his baptism in the Jordan was not without meaning; nay, its singular significance reveals itself as we contemplate the sinlessness of his character. We rightly regard the baptism of Jesus as the first act of his public ministry; and does he not present himself at the very outset in that peculiar character and office which he sustains throughout his mediatorial work, identifying himself with his people as their representative and their head; taking on him their sins, numbering himself with transgressors—doing now, enduring afterwards what it became them as sinners to do, as sinners to suffer? . . . .

But let us now fix our eye on what happened immediately after the baptism of Christ. He came up straightway out of the water. He did not wait, as the Jews asked the proselyte to do, to listen to still further instruction out of the law; instruction likely to be the more deeply impressed by the time and circumstances under which it was given. He did not wait, as we are led from the very expression employed here to believe that many of those did who received the baptism from John. In him there was no need for such delay or any such instruction. The law of his God, was it not written wholly, deeply, indelibly in his heart? Straightway, therefore, he goes forth from under the Baptist's hands. John's wondering eye is on him as he ascends the river banks. There he throws himself into the attitude, engages in the exercise of prayer, and then it is, as with uplifted hands he gazes into the heavens, that he sees them opened above his head, the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him, and a voice from heaven saying to him, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

The requirements of the narrative, as given by St. Matthew, St.

Mark, and St. Luke, do not involve us in the belief that the bystanders generally, if present in any numbers, saw these sights and heard that voice. Its being so distinctly specified by each of the evangelists that it was He who saw and heard, would rather lead us to the inference that the sight and the hearing were confined to our Lord. John, indeed, tells us that he saw the vision, and we may believe therefore that he also heard the voice, but beyond the two, who may have been standing apart and by themselves, it would not seem that the wonders of this incident were at the time revealed. Other instances of like manifestations had this feature attached to them, that they were revealed to those whose organs were opened and allowed to take them in, and were hidden from those around. Stephen saw the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. The clamorous crowd about him did not see as he did. Had the vision burst upon their eyes, it would have awed their tumultuous rage to rest. When Saul was struck down on his way to Damascus, his companions saw indeed a light and heard some sounds, but they neither saw the person of the Saviour nor distinguished the words he spoke, though in one sense in a much fitter condition to do so than Saul was. It is said of the disciples on the day of Pentecost, that there appeared unto them tongues as of fire which rested on the head of each; it is not likely that these were seen by those who mocked.

But be it as it may as to the other spectators and auditors, it is evident that these supernatural appearances gave to the baptism of Jesus a new character in the Baptist's eyes, as they should do in ours. In the descending dove, outward emblem of the descending Spirit, he not only saw the preappointed token that the greater than he, who was to baptize with the Holy Ghost, was before him, but in the whole incident he beheld the first great step in our Lord's public and official life—the setting of him openly apart as the Lamb for the sacrifice. . . .

As Jesus stepped forth after the baptism on the banks of the river, he stood severed from the past, connected with a new future; Nazareth, its quiet home, its happy days, its peaceful occupations, lay behind; trials and toils and suffering and death lay before him. He would not have been the Son of man had he not felt the significance and solemnity of the hour; he would not have been the full partaker of our human nature had the weight of his new position, new duties, new trials not pressed heavily upon his heart. He turns, in the pure, true instinct of his sinless humanity to seek support and strength in God, to throw himself and all his future upon his Father in prayer.

But who may tell us how he felt and what he prayed? what desires, what hopes, what solitudes went up from the heart at least, if not from the lips, of this extraordinary suppliant! Never before had the throne of the heavenly Grace been thus approached, and never before was such answer given. The prayer ascends direct from earth to heaven, and brings the immediate answer down. It is as he prays that the Spirit comes, bringing light and strength and comfort to the Saviour, sustaining him under that consciousness of his Sonship to God, which now fills, expands, exalts his weak humanity. And does not our great Head and Representative stand before us here a type and pattern of every true believer in the Lord, as to the duty, the privilege, the power of prayer? Of him, and of him only of the sons of men, might it be said that he prayed without ceasing; that his life was one of constant and sustained communion with his Father; and yet you find him on all the great occasions of his life having recourse to separate, solitary, sometimes to prolonged acts of devotion. His baptism, his appointment of the twelve apostles, his escape from the attempt to make him a king, his transfiguration, his agony in the garden, his death upon the cross, were all hallowed by prayer. The first and the last acts of his ministry were acts of prayer. From the lowest depth, from the highest elevation of that ministry, he poured out his spirit in prayer. For his mission on earth, for all his heaviest trials, he prepared himself by prayer. And should we not prepare for our poor earthly service, and fortify ourselves against temptations and trials, by following that great example? The heavens above are not shut up against us, the Spirit who descended like a dove has not taken wings and flown away for ever from this earth. There is a power by which these heavens can still be penetrated, which can still bring down upon us that gentle messenger of rest—the power that lies in simple, humble, earnest, continued believing prayer.

The Holy Spirit, as he descended upon Jesus, was pleased to assume the form and gentle motion of a dove gliding down from the skies. He came not now as a rushing mighty wind. He sat not on Jesus as a cloven tongue of fire. It was right that when he came to do the work of quick and strong conviction necessary in converting the souls of men, to bestow those gifts by which the first missionaries of the cross should be qualified for prosecuting that work, the rush as of a whirlwind should sweep through the room in which the disciples were assembled, and the cloven tongues of fire should come down and rest upon their heads. But the visitation of the Spirit to the Saviour was for an altogether different purpose, and it could not be more fitly represented than by the meek-eyed dove, the chosen

symbol of gentleness and affection. The eagle with its wing of power, its eye of fire, its beak of terror was the bird of Jove. The dove the bird of Jesus. To him the Spirit came not, as in dealing with the souls of men, to bring light out of darkness, order out of confusion, but to point out as the Saviour of the world the meek and the lowly, the gentle and the loving Jesus.

But was no ulterior purpose served by the descent of the Spirit on this occasion? We touch a mystery here we cannot solve, and need not try to penetrate. The sinless humanity of Jesus was brought into intimate and everlasting union with the divine nature of the Son of God, doubly secured as we should say from sin, and fully qualified for all the Messianic service, and yet we are taught that that humanity was impregnated and fitted for its work by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He was born of the Holy Ghost. He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. In the synagogue of Nazareth, where he had first opened his lips as a public teacher, there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah; he read the words, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me;" and having read the passage out, he closed the book, and said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." John testified of him saying: "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God, for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him." Jesus said of himself: "If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then is the kingdom of God come unto you." "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power." It was through the eternal Spirit that he offered himself without spot to God. Heb. 9:14. He was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. Rom. 1:4. It was through the Holy Ghost that he gave commandments to the apostles whom he had chosen, until the day in which he was taken up. Acts 1:2. So it is that through every stage of his career the Spirit is with him, qualifying him for every work, why or how he alone could tell us who could lift that veil which shrouds the innermost recesses of the Spirit of the incarnate Son of God.

As the Spirit lighted upon Jesus, there came to him a voice from heaven. This voice was twice heard again; on the Mount of Transfiguration, and within the temple. It was the voice of the Father. No man, since the fall of our first parent, had ever heard that voice before, as no man has ever heard it since. The fall sealed the Father's lips in silence; all divine communications afterwards with man were made through the Son. It was he who appeared and spake to the patriarchs; it was he who spake from the summit of



Sinai, and was the giver of the law; but now for the first time the Father's lips are opened, the long-kept silence is broken, that this testimony of the Father to the Sonship of Jesus, this expression of his entire good pleasure with him as he enters upon his ministry, may be given. That testimony and expression of approval were repeated afterwards in the very same words at the transfiguration; the words indeed on that occasion were spoken not to, but of Jesus, and addressed to the disciples; and so with a latent reference perhaps to Moses and Elias, the Father said to them: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him." But at the baptism St. Mark and St. Luke agree in stating that the words were spoken not of, but directly to Christ himself. Primarily and eminently it may have been for Christ's own sake that the words were upon this occasion spoken; and as we contemplate them in this light, we feel that no thought can fathom their import, nor gauge what fulness of joy and strength they may have carried into the bosom of our Lord. But here too there is a veil which we must not try to lift. Instead of thinking then what meaning or power this assurance of his Sonship, and of the Father's full complacency in him, may have had for Christ, let us take it as opening to our view the one and only way of our adoption and acceptance by the Father, even by our being so well pleased in all things with Christ, our having such simple, implicit faith in him, that the Father looking upon us as one with him, becomes also well pleased with us.



## IX.

## THE TEMPTATION.\*

SATAN was suffered to succeed in his temptation of our first parents. His success may for the moment have seemed to him complete, secure; for did not the sentence run, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die"? And did not that sentence come from One whose steadfast truthfulness—dispute it as he might in words with Eve—none knew better than himself? Having once then got man to sin, he might have fancied that he had broken for ever the tie that bound earth to heaven, that he had armed against the first inhabitants of our globe the same resistless might, and the same unyielding justice, by which he and the partners of the first

\* Matthew 4 : 1-11 ; Mark 1 : 12, 13 ; Luke 4 : 1-13.

revolt in heaven had been driven away into their dark and ignominious prison-house. But if such a hope had place for a season in the tempter's breast, it must surely have given way when, summoned together with his victims into the divine presence, the Lord God said to him: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Obscure as these words may at the time have seemed, yet must they have taught Satan to know that his empire over this new-formed world was neither to be an undisputed nor an undivided one. An enmity of some kind between his seed and the woman's seed was to arise; no mere temporary irritation and insubordination on the part of his new subjects, but an enmity which would prove fatal to himself and to his kingdom, the final advantage in the predicted warfare being all against him; for while he was to bruise the heel of his enemy, that enemy was to bruise his head, to crush his power.

It could not therefore have been with a sense of security free from uneasy anticipations, that from the days of the first Adam down to the birth of the second, the God of this world held his empire over our earth. His dominion was the dominion of sin and death, and his triumph might seem complete, none of all our race being found who could keep himself from sin; while every one that sinned had died. But were there no checks to the exercise of his power, nothing to inspire him with alarm? Had not Enoch and Elijah passed away from the world without tasting death? And must it not have appeared to him an inscrutable mystery that so many human spirits escaped at death altogether from beneath his sway? There were those prophecies, besides, delivered in Judea, of which he could not be ignorant, getting clearer and clearer as they grew in number, speaking of the advent of a great deliverer of the race; there were those Jewish ceremonies prefiguring some great event disastrous to his reign; there was the whole history and government of that wonderful people, the seed of Israel, guided by another hand than his, and regulated with a hostile purpose.

All this must have awakened dark forebodings within Satan's breast; forebodings stirred into a heightened terror when one of the woman's seed at last appeared, who, for thirty years, with perfect ease, apparently without a struggle, resisted all the seductions by which his brethren of mankind had been led into sin. The visit of Gabriel to Nazareth, the angelic salutations, the angels that appeared and the hymns that floated over the hills of Bethlehem, the adoration of the shepherds, the worship of the wise men, the prophecies

of the temple—all these, let us believe, were known to the great adversary of our race; but not one nor all of them together excited in him such wonder or alarm as this simple fact, that here at last was one who stood absolutely stainless in the midst of the world's manifold pollutions. So long, however, as Jesus lived quietly and obscurely at Nazareth he might be permitted to enjoy his solitary triumph undisturbed, but his baptism in the Jordan brings him out from his retreat. This voice from heaven, a voice that neither man nor devil had ever heard before, resounding through the opened skies, proclaims Him to be more than a son of man—to be, in very deed, the Son of God. Who can this mysterious being be?—an alien and an enemy, Satan has counted him from his youth. But his Sonship to God. What can that imply; how is it to be manifested? The time has come for putting him to extreme trial, and, if he may not be personally overcome, for forcing him to disclose his character at the commencement of his career.

The opportunity for making the attempt is given. "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." It was not, we may believe, under any thing like compulsion, outward or inward, that Jesus acted when immediately after his baptism he retired to the desert. Between the promptings of the Spirit of God and the movements of Christ there ever must have been the most entire consent and harmony. Why, then, so instantly after his public inauguration to his earthly work, is there this voluntary retirement of our Lord, this hiding of himself in lonely solitudes? Accepting here the statement of the Evangelist, that it was to furnish the prince of darkness with the fit opportunity of assaulting him, may we not believe that these forty days in the wilderness without food served some other ends besides—did for our Lord in his higher vocation what the forty days of fasting did for Moses and Elijah in their lesser prophetic office; that they were days of preparation, meditation, prayer—a brief season interposed between the peaceful private life of Nazareth, and the public troubled life on which he was about to enter, for the purpose of girding him up for the great task assigned to him—a season of such close, absorbing, elevating, spiritual exercises that the spirit triumphed over the body, and for a time felt not even the need of daily food? It was not till these forty days were over that he was a hungered, nor was it till hunger was felt that the tempter came in person to assault. The expressions used indeed by St. Mark and St. Luke appear to imply that the temptation ran through all the forty days; but if so, it must, in the first instance, have been of an inward and purely spiritual character, such

as we can well conceive mingling with and shadowing those other exercises to which the days and nights of that long solitude and fasting were devoted.

And yet, though the holy spirit of our Lord prompted him to follow with willing footstep the leadings of the Holy Ghost, his true humanity may well have shrunk from what awaited him in the desert. He knew that he was there to come into close contact with, to meet in personal encounter the head of that kingdom he was commissioned to overthrow; and, even as in the garden human weakness sank tremblingly under the burden of immeasurable woe, so here it may have shrunk from such an interview and such a conflict, needing as it were to be urged by Divine compulsion, and thus authorizing the strong expression which St. Mark employs, "Immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness." It may in fact have been no small part of that trial which ran through the forty days, that he had continually before him the approach and the encounter with the prince of darkness.

Whatever that state of his spirit was which rendered him insensible to the cravings of hunger, it terminates with the close of the forty days. The inward supports that had borne him up during that rapt ecstatic condition are removed. He sinks back into a natural condition. The common bodily sensations begin to be experienced; a strong craving for food is felt. Now, then, is the moment for the tempter to make his first assault upon the Holy One, as weak, famished, the hunger of his long fast gnawing at his heart, he wanders with the wild beasts as his sole companions over the frightful solitudes. Coming upon him abruptly, he says to Jesus, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." The words of the recent baptismal scene at the Jordan are yet ringing in Satan's ears. He knows not what to make of them. He would fain believe them false; or better still, he would fain prove them false by prevailing upon Christ himself to doubt their truth. For, for him to doubt his Father's word would be virtually to renounce, disprove his Sonship. Even then, as by his artful insidious speech to the woman in the garden—"Yea, has God said, In the day thou eatest thou shalt die?"—he sought to insinuate a secret doubt of the divine truthfulness and divine goodness, so here, into the bosom of Jesus in the wilderness, he seeks to infuse a kindred doubt.

'If thou be really the Son of God, as I have so lately heard thee called—but canst thou be? can it be here, and thus, alone in these desert places, foodless, companionless, comfortless, for so many days, that God would leave or trust his Son? But if thou wilt not doubt



that thou art his Son, surely God could never mean or wish that his Son should continue in such a state as this? If thou be truly what thou hast been called, then all power must be thine; whatsoever things the Father doeth, thou too must be able to do. Show, then, thy Sonship, exert thy power, relieve thyself from this pressing hunger; "command that these stones be made bread." The temptation is here twofold: to shake if possible Christ's confidence in Him who had brought him into such a condition of extreme need, and to induce him, under the influence of that distrust, to exert at once his own power to deliver himself, to work a miracle to provide himself with food. The temptation is at once repelled, not by any assertion of his Sonship, or of his abiding trust in God, in opposition to the insidious doubt suggested—for that doubt the Saviour never cherished; the shaft that carried this doubt in it, though artfully contrived and skilfully directed, glanced innocuous from the mind of that confiding Son, who was ever so well pleased with the Father, as the Father had declared himself to be with him.

Nor was the temptation repelled by any such counter argument as that it was inadmissible to exert his Divine power merely for his own benefit; but by a simple quotation from the book of Deuteronomy: "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Jesus waives thus all question about his being the Son of God, or how it behooved him in that character to act. He takes his place as a son of man, and lays his hand upon an incident in the history of the children of Israel, who, led out into the wilderness, and continuing as destitute of common food forty years as he had been for forty days, received in due time the manna provided for them by God, who said to them afterwards, by the lips of Moses: "The Lord thy God humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." It was by the word of the Lord's creative power that for those hungry Israelites the manna was provided; that word went forth at the Lord's own time, and to meet his people's wants in the Lord's own way; and upon that word, that is, upon Him whose word it was, Jesus, when now like the Israelites a hungered in the wilderness, will rely. It is not necessary for him to turn stones into bread in order to sustain his life; other kinds of food his Father, if he so pleased, could provide, and he will leave him to do as he pleases. From that entire dependence on his Father, to which in his present circumstances, and under that Father's guidance, he had been shut up, he had no desire to be relieved—would

certainly do nothing prematurely to relieve himself, and least of all at Satan's bidding would use the higher, the divine faculty that was in him, as a mere instrument of self-gratification. It was in the same spirit of self-denial, that ever afterwards he acted. Those who taunted him on the cross, by saying, "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross," knew not how exact an echo their speech at Calvary was of Satan's speech in the wilderness—how thoroughly they were proving their parentage, as being of their father the devil. But Jesus would do neither as Satan nor these his children bade him. His power divine was given him to execute the great office of our spiritual deliverer: his way to the execution of his office lay through trial, suffering and death, and he would not call that power in to save him from any part of the required endurance; neither from the hunger of the wilderness, nor from any of the far heavier loads he had afterwards to bear.

Foiled in his first attempt, accepting but profiting by his defeat, the artful adversary at once reverses his method, and assaults the Saviour precisely on the other side. He has tried to shake Christ's trust in his Father; he has failed; that trust seems only to gather strength the more severely it is proved; he will work now upon that very trust, and try to press it into presumption. "Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down." 'I acknowledge that you have been right in the wilderness, that you have acted as a true Son of the Father. You have given, in fact, no mean proof of your entire confidence in him as your Father, in standing there in the extremity of hunger, and virtually saying, 'I am here by the will of God, here he can and he will provide, I leave all to him.' But come, I ask you now to make another and still more striking display of your dependence in all possible conjunctures on the Divine aid. Show me, and all those worshippers in the court below, how far this faith of yours in your Father will carry you. Do now, what in the sight of all will prove you to be the very one the Jews are looking for. If thou be the Son of God, then, as we shall presume thou art, cast thyself down; the God who sustained thy body without food in the wilderness, can surely sustain it as you fling yourself into the yielding air; the people who are longing to see some wonder done by their expected Messiah, will hail you as such at once, when they see you, instead of being dashed to pieces, floating down at their feet as gently as a dove, and alighting in the midst of them. Give to me and them this proof of the greatness of your faith, the reality of your Sonship to God; and if you

want a warrant for the act in those Scriptures which you have already quoted, remember what is written in one of those ancient Psalms, a psalm that the wise men say relates to you: "He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone."

As promptly as before the Lord replies: "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Here again, there is no attempt at argument, no correction of the quotation which the tempter had made, no reminding him that, in quoting, he had omitted one essential clause, "He shall keep thee in all thy ways," the ways of his appointment, not of thine own fashioning. The one Scripture is simply met by the other, and left to be interpreted thereby. "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." To trust was one thing, to tempt another. Jesus would rely to the very uttermost upon the Divine faithfulness, upon God's promised care and help; but he would not put that faithfulness to a needless trial. If put by the devil in a position of difficulty and danger, he will cherish an unbounded trust in God, and if extrication from that position be desirable, and no other way of effecting it be left, he will even believe that God will miraculously interpose in his behalf. But he will not of his own accord, without any proper call or invitation, for no other purpose than to make an experiment of the Father's willingness to aid him, to make a show of the kind of heavenly protection he could claim; he will not voluntarily place himself in such a position. He was here on the pinnacle of the temple, from that pinnacle there was another open, easy, safe method of descent; why should he refuse to take it if he desired to descend; why fling himself into open space? If he did so unasked, unordered by God himself, what warrant could he have that the Divine power would be put forth to bear him up? God had indeed promised to bear him up, but he had not bidden him cast himself down, for no other purpose than to see whether he would be borne up or no; to do what Satan wished him to do, would be to show not the strength of his faith, but the extent of his presumption. Thus once again by that sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, is the second thrust of the adversary turned aside.

These first two temptations, while opposite in character, have yet much that is common to both. The preface to each of them is the same: "If thou be the Son of God," a preface obviously suggested by the recent testimony at the baptism. They have also the common object of probing to the bottom, and thus trying to ascertain, the powers and privileges which this Sonship to God conferred. There was curiosity as well as malice in the double effort to do so, and the

subtlety of their method lay in this, that they were so constructed that had Christ yielded to either, in the very disclosure of his Godhead there had been an abuse of its power. Had Jesus taken the devil's way of proving his strength, he would have taken the very way to have broken it. In those first two temptations, Satan had spoken nothing of himself, had revealed nothing of his purposes: but balked in them he now drops the mask, appears in his own person, and boldly claims homage from Christ: "Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Had it been upon the actual summit of the temple at Jerusalem that Jesus previously had been placed, and if so, how was his conveyance thither effected? was it upon the actual summit of some earthly mountain that the feet of our Saviour were now planted, and if so, how was it, how could it be that all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them were brought before his eye? We have no answer to give to these questions; we care not to speculate as to the outward mode in which each temptation is managed. We are willing to believe any thing as to the accessories of this narrative which leaves untouched its truthfulness as an historic record of an actual and personal encounter between the prince of darkness and the Prince of Light. That the gospel narrative is such a record, we undoubtingly believe, and are strengthened in our faith as we perceive not only the suitableness and the subtlety of each individual temptation, as addressed to the humanity of our Lord, assailing it in the only quarters in which it lay open to assault; but the comprehensiveness of the whole temptation, as exemplifying those classes of temptations by which humanity at large, by which each of us, individually, is seduced from the path of true obedience unto God. The body, soul, and spirit of our Lord were each in turn invaded; by the lust of the flesh, by the lust of the eyes, by the pride of life, it was attempted to draw him away from his allegiance. The first temptation was built upon bodily appetite, the hunger of the long fast; the second, upon the love of ostentation, the desire we all have to show to the uttermost in what favor we stand with God or men; the third, upon ambition, the love of earthly, outward power and glory.

The third had, however, a special adaptation to Christ's personal character and position at the time, and this very adaptation lent to it peculiar strength, making it, as it was the last, so also the most insidious, the most alluring of the three. Jesus knew the ancient prophecies about a universal monarchy that was to be set up in the



days of Messiah the prince. From the days of his childhood, when in the temple he had sat among the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions, the sacred volume which contained these prophecies had been in his hands. Who shall tell us with what interest, with what wonder, with what self-application these prophecies were pondered by him in the days of his youth, during which he grew in wisdom as he grew in years? Who shall tell us how soon or how fully he attained the sublime consciousness, that he was himself the Messiah of whom that volume spake? Whatever may have been his earlier experience, at the time at least when the attestation at his baptism was given, that consciousness filled and pervaded his spirit. But he fell not into the general delusion which, in its desire for a conquering and victorious prince, lost sight of a suffering, dying Redeemer. He knew full well that the path marked out for him as the Saviour of mankind lay through profoundest sorrow, and would end in an agonizing death. How much of all this Satan knew, it would be presumptuous to conjecture. This, however, we are assured that he knew—for he had heard and could quote the ancient prophecies which pointed to it—he knew about a monarchy that in the last days the God of heaven was to set up, which was to overturn his own, which was to embrace all the kingdoms of the world, and into which all the glory of these kingdoms was to be brought. And he may, we might almost say he must, have known beforehand of the toil and strife and hard endurance through which the throne of that monarchy was to be reached by his great rival.

And now that rival is before him, just entering upon his career. Upon that rival he will make a bold attempt. He will show him all those kingdoms that have been so long under his dominion as the god of this world. He will offer them all to him at once, without a single blow being struck, a single peril encountered, a single suffering endured. He will save him all that conflict which, if not doubtful in the issue, was to be so painful in its progress. He will lay down his sceptre, and suffer Jesus to take it up. In one great gift he will make over his whole right of empire over these kingdoms of the world to Christ, suffer him at once to enter upon possession of them, and clothe himself with all their glory. This is his glittering bribe, and all he asks in return is that Jesus shall do him homage, as the superior by whom the splendid fief was given, and under whom it is held.

A bold and blasphemous attempt, for who gave him those kingdoms thus to give away? And how could he imagine that Jesus was open to a bribe, or would ever bow the knee to him? Let us remember, however, that we all judge others by ourselves; that there are

those who think that every man has his price; that, make the bribe but large enough, and any man may be bought. And at the head of such thinkers is Satan. He judged Jesus by himself. And even as through lust of government he, archangel though he was, had not hesitated to withdraw his worship from the Supreme, so may he have thought that, taken unawares, even the Son of God himself might have fallen before the dazzling temptation. Had he done so, Satan would indeed have triumphed; for putting wholly out of the question the violated relationship to the Father, Jesus would thus have renounced all the purely moral and religious purposes of his mission—would have ceased to be regarded as the author of a spiritual revolution, and the founder of a spiritual kingdom, affecting myriads of human spirits from the beginning to the end of time, and would thenceforth have taken up the character of a mere vulgar earthly monarch.

But Satan knew not with whom he had to do: "The eye of Jesus may for a moment have been dazzled by the offer made, and this implied neither imperfection nor sin, but it refused to rest upon the seducing spectacle. It turned quickly and resolutely away. No sooner is the bribe offered than it is repelled. In haste, as if that magnificent panorama was not one on which even his pure eye should be suffered to repose; as if this temptation were one which even he could not afford to dally with; in anger too at the base condition coupled with the bribe, and as if he who offered it could no longer be suffered to remain in his presence, he calls the devil by his name, and says: "Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Satan had wanted Jesus to give him some proof of his divine power, and now he gets it; gets it as that command is given which he must instantly obey. At once all that glittering illusion that he had conjured up vanishes from the view. At once his hateful presence is withdrawn, the conflict is over, the victory is complete. Jesus stands once more alone in the wilderness, but he is not left alone. Angels come and minister unto him, gazing with wonder on that mysterious man who has entered into this solitary conflict with the head of the principalities and powers of darkness, and foiled him at every point.

But how are we to look upon this mysterious passage in the life of Christ? Are we to read the record of it as we would the story of a duel between two great chiefs, under neither of whom we shall ever have to serve, in the mode and tactics of whose warfare we have consequently but little interest? The very reverse. He who appeared that day in the wilderness before Jesus, and by so many wily acts

strove to rob him of his integrity as a Son of the Father, goeth about still as the arch-enemy of our souls, seeking whom he may devour. His power over us is not weakened, though it failed on Christ. His malice against us is not lessened, though it was impotent when tried on him. The time, the person, the circumstances all bestowed an undoubted peculiarity upon these temptations of the wilderness, the temple, and the mountain-top. We may be very sure that by temptations the same in outward form no other human being shall ever be assailed. But setting aside all that was special in them, let us lay our hand on the radical and essential principle of each of these three temptations, that we may see whether each of us is not still personally exposed to it.

In the first instance, Christ, when under the pressure of one of the most urgent appetites of our nature, is tempted to use a power that he got for other purposes, to minister to his own gratification. He is tempted, in fact, to use unlawful means to procure food. Is that a rare temptation? Not to speak here of those poor unfortunates who, under a like pressure, are tempted to put forth their hands to what is not their own, what shall we say of the merchant whom, in the brightest season of his prosperity, some sore and unexpected calamity overtakes? Through some reckless speculation, he sees the gay vision of his hopes give way, and utter ruin stand before him but a few days off. The dismal picture of a family accustomed to wealth plunged into poverty already haunts his eye and rends his heart. But a short respite still is given. Those around him are ignorant how he stands, his credit still is good, confidence in him is still unbroken. He can use that credit, he can employ the facilities which that confidence still gives. He dishonorably does so; with stealthy hand he places a portion of his fortune beyond the reach of his future creditors to keep it for his family's use. That man meets and falls under the very same temptation with which our Lord and Master was assailed. Distrusting God, he uses the powers and opportunities given him, unrighteously and for selfish ends. He forgets that man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Or what again shall we say of him who, fairly committed to the faith of Christ, and embarked in the great effort of overcoming all that is evil in his evil nature, plunges, with scarce a thought, into scenes and amid temptations such that it would need a miracle to bring him forth unscathed? That man meets and falls under the very same temptation with which our Saviour was assailed, when the devil said, "Cast thyself down," and quoted the promise of Divine

support. Many and most precious indeed are the promises of Divine protection and support given us in the word of God, but they are not for us to rest on if recklessly and needlessly we rush into danger, crossing any of the common laws of nature, or trampling the dictates of ordinary prudence and the lesson of universal experience beneath our feet. It is not faith, it is presumption which does so.

It might seem that we could find no actual parallel to the last temptation of our Lord, but in truth it is the one of all the three that is most frequently presented. Thrones and kingdoms, and all their glory, are not held out to us, but the wealth and the distinctions, the honors and the pleasures of life—these in different forms, in different degrees, ply with their solicitations all of us in every rank, from the highest to the lowest, tempting us away from God to worship and serve the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for evermore. A spectacle not so wide, less gorgeous in its coloring, but as sensuous, as illusive as that presented to Jesus on the mountain-top, the arch-deceiver spreads out before our eyes, whispering to our hearts, "All this will I give you;" all this money, all that ease, all that pleasure, all that rank, all that power; but in saying so he deals with us more treacherously than he dealt with Christ of old. With him he boldly and broadly laid it down as the condition of the grant, that Christ should fall down and worship him. He asks from us no bending of the knee, no act of outward worship; all he asks is, that we believe his false promises, and turn away from God and Christ to give ourselves up to worldliness of heart and habit and pursuit. If we do so, he is indifferent how we now think or act toward himself personally, for this is one of the worst peculiarities of that kingdom of darkness over which he presides, that its ruler knows no better subjects than those who deny his very being and disown his rule.

But if it be to the very same temptations as those which beset our divine Lord and Master, that we are still exposed, let us be grateful to him for teaching us how to overcome them. He used throughout a single weapon. He had the whole armory of heaven at his command; but he chose only one instrument of defence, the word, the written word, that sword of the Spirit. It was it that he so successfully employed. Why this exclusive use of an old weapon? He did not need to have recourse to it. A word of his own spoken would have had as much power as a written one quoted; but then the lesson of his example had been lost to us—the evidence that he himself has left behind of the power over temptation that lies in the written word. Knowing, then, that you wrestle not with flesh and blood alone, but with angels, and principalities, and powers, and with him



the head of all, of whose devices it becomes you not to be ignorant, take unto you the whole armor of God, for all is needed; but remember, of all the pieces of which that panoply is composed, the last that is put into the hand of the Christian soldier by the great Captain of his salvation—put into his hand as the one that He himself, on the great occasion of his conflict with the devil, used—put into his hand as the most effective and the only one that serves at once for defence and for assault—is the sword of the Spirit, the word of God. By it all other parts of the armor are guarded. The helmet might be shattered on the brow, the shield wrenched from the arm, did it not protect; for hope and faith, that helmet and that shield, on what do they rest, but upon the word of the living God? When the tempter comes then, and plies you with his manifold and strong solicitations, be ready to meet him, as Jesus met him in the wilderness, and you shall thus come to know how true is that saying of David: “By the words of thy lips I have kept me from the path of the destroyer.”

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## X.

### THE FIRST DISCIPLES.\*

FROM the forty days in the desert, from the long fast, from the triple assault, from the great victory won, from the companionship of the ministering angels, Jesus returns to the banks of the Jordan, and mingles, unnoticed and unknown, among the disciples of the Baptist. On the day of his return, a deputation from the Sanhedrim in Jerusalem arrives, to institute a formal and authoritative inquiry into the character and claims of the great preacher of repentance. John's answers to the questions put by these deputies are chiefly negative in their character. He is not the Christ; he is not Elijah risen from the dead; neither is he that prophet by whom, as they imagined, Elijah was to be accompanied; who he is he would not say, however pointedly interrogated. But what he is, he so far informs them as to quote and apply to himself the passage from the prophecies of Isaiah, which spake of a voice crying in the wilderness, “Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” Challenged as to his right to baptize, if he is not that Christ, nor Elias, nor that prophet, John can now speak as he had not been able to do previously. Hitherto he had spoken indeterminately of one whom he knew not, the greater than he, who was to come after him; but now the sign from

\* John 1 : 29-51.

heaven had been given, the Spirit had been seen descending and abiding on Jesus. From the day of his baptism Jesus had withdrawn John knew not whither, but now he sees him in the crowd, and says: "I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; he it is, who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose."

Having got so little to satisfy them as to who the Baptist was, it does not seem that the deputies from Jerusalem troubled themselves to make any inquiries as to who this other and greater than John was. Nor was it otherwise with the multitude. Though the words of the Baptist, so publicly spoken, were such as might well awaken curiosity, the day passed, and Jesus remained unknown, assuming, saying, doing nothing by which he could be recognized. That John needed to point him out in order to recognition confirms our belief, derived in the first instance directly from the narrative itself, that at the baptism none but John and Jesus heard the voice from heaven, or saw the descending dove. Had the bystanders seen and heard these, among the disciples of John there would have been some ready at once to recognize Jesus on his return from the desert. But it is not so. Jesus remains hidden, and will not with his own hand lift the veil—will not bear any witness of himself—leaves it to another to do so.

But he must not continue thus unknown—that were to frustrate the very end of all John's ministry. The next day, therefore, as John sees Jesus coming to him, while yet he is some way off, he points to him, and says: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me; for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. . . . I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God."

John's first public official testimony to Christ was, as it seems to me, particularly remarkable, as containing no reference whatever to that character or office in which the mass of the Jewish people might have been willing enough to recognize him, but confined to those two attributes of his person and work which they so resolutely rejected. There is no mention here of Jesus as Messiah, the Prince, the King of Israel. The record that John bears of him is, that he is the Son of God, the Lamb of God. He had lately heard the voice from

heaven saying: "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." In giving him then this title, in calling him the Son of God, John was but reëchoing, as it were, the testimony of the Father. Taught thus to use and to apply it, it may be fairly questioned whether the Baptist in his first employment of it entered into the full significance of the term, as declarative of Christ's unity of nature with the Father. That in its highest, its only true sense indeed, it did carry with it such a meaning, and was understood to do so by those who knew best how to interpret it, appears in many a striking passage of the life of Jesus, and most conspicuously of all, in his trial and condemnation before the Jewish Sanhedrim. It was a title whose assumption by Jesus involved, in the apprehension of those who regarded him but as a man, nothing short of blasphemy. Such is the title here given to him by the Baptist. Whether he fully understood it or not, we can trace its adoption and employment to an obvious and natural source.

But that other title, the Lamb of God, and the description annexed to it, "which taketh away the sin of the world," how came the Baptist to apply these to Christ, and what did he mean by doing so? Here we cannot doubt that the same inner and divine teaching which taught him in a passage of Isaiah's prophecies to see himself, taught him in another to see the Saviour, and that it was from that passage in which the prophet speaks of the Messiah as the Lamb brought to the slaughter, as a sheep dumb before his shearers, that he borrowed the title now for the first time bestowed upon Jesus. From the same passage too he learned that the Anointed of the Lord was to be "wounded for our transgressions, to be bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was to be upon him, and with his stripes we are to be healed." Here in Jesus John sees the greater than himself whose way he was to prepare before him, but that way he sees to be one leading him to suffering and to death; his perhaps the only Jewish eye at that moment opened to discern the truth that it was through this suffering and this death that the spiritual victories of the great King were to be achieved; that it was upon them that his spiritual kingdom was to have its broad and deep foundations laid. John's baptism had hitherto been one of repentance for the remission of sins. This remission had been held out in prospect as the end to which repentance was to conduct; but all about its source, its fulness, its certainty had been obscure—obscure perhaps to John's own eyes; obscure at least in the manner of his speaking about it; but now he sees the Lamb of God, the suffering, dying Jesus, taking away by bearing it the sin of the world—not

taking away by subduing it the sinfulness of the world; that John could not have meant, and Jesus has not done—but taking the world's sin away by taking it on himself, and expiring beneath its load, making the great atoning sacrifice, fulfilling all the types of the Jewish ceremonial, all that the paschal lamb, all that the lamb of the morning and evening sacrifice had been typifying.

In the two declarations then of John, "This is the Son of God," "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," you have in a form as distinct, as short and compendious, as it is anywhere else to be found—the gospel of the kingdom. The divine nature of the man Christ Jesus, the completeness and efficacy of the shedding of his blood, of the offering up of himself for the remission of sins, are they not here very simply and plainly set forth? We are not asked to believe that the Baptist himself understood his own testimony to Christ, as with the light thrown upon it by the epistles, and especially in this instance, by the epistle to the Hebrews, we now understand it; but assuredly he understood so much of it as that he himself saw in Christ, and desired that others should see in him, the heaven-laid channel, opened up through his life and death, of that Divine mercy which covereth all the transgressions of every penitent believing soul.

How interesting to hear this gospel of the grace of God preached so early, so simply, so earnestly, so believingly by him whose office in all the earlier parts of his ministry was so purely moral, a call simply to repentance, to acts and deeds of justice, mercy, truth. But this was the issue to which all those preparatory instructions were to conduct. The law in the hands of John was to be a schoolmaster to guide at last to Christ; and when the time for that guidance came, was it not with a sensation of relief, a bounding throb of exulting satisfaction, that—conscious of how impotent in themselves all his efforts were to get men to repent and reform, while the pardon of their sins was anxiously toiled after in the midst of perplexity and doubt, instead of being gratefully and joyfully accepted as God's free gift in Christ—the Baptist proclaimed to all around, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Nor was he discouraged that his announcement met with no response that day from the crowd around; that still his voice was as the voice of one crying in the wilderness. The many who waited on his ministry and partook of his baptism came from curiosity, acted on a passing impulse, hoped that some new and better state of things socially and politically was to be ushered in by this strange child of the desert—and had no deeper wants to be supplied or spiritual



longings to be satisfied. Quite strange—if not unmeaning, yet unwelcome—to their ears, this new utterance of the Baptist. It was not after the Lamb of God, not after one who was to take away their sins, that they were seeking. But there were others of a different mould, partakers of the spirit of Simeon and Anna, waiting for the consolation of Israel, for the coming of one to whom, whatever outward kingdom he was to set up, they mainly looked as their spiritual Lord and King, in the days of whose kingdom peace was to enter troubled consciences, and there should be rest for wearied hearts. The eyes of these waiters for the morning saw the first streaks of dawn in the ministry of the Baptist, and some of them had already enrolled themselves as his disciples, attaching themselves permanently to his person.

The next day after he had given his first testimony to Christ's lamblike and sacrificial character and office—a testimony apparently so little heeded, attended at least with no outward and visible result—John is standing with two of these disciples by his side. He will repeat to them the testimony of yesterday; they had heard it already, but he will try whether it will not have another and more powerful effect when given not promiscuously to a general audience, but specifically to these two. Looking upon Jesus as he walked, he directed their attention to him by simply saying once again, "Behold the LAMB OF GOD!"—leaving it to their memory to supply all about him which in the course of the two preceding days he had declared. Not now without effect. Neither of these two men may know as yet in what sense he is the Lamb of God, nor how by him their sin is to be taken away; but both have felt their need of some one willing and able to guide their agitated hearts to a secure haven of rest, and they hope to find in him thus pointed out the one they need. They follow him. John restrains them not; it is as he would wish. Willingly, gladly he sees them part from him to follow this new Master. He knows that they are putting themselves under a better, higher guidance than any which he can give. But who are these two men? One of them is Andrew, better known to us by his brotherhood to Simon. The other reveals himself by the very manner in which he draws the veil over his own name. He would not name himself, and by that very modesty which he displays he stands revealed. It is no other than that disciple whom Jesus loved; no other than the writer of this Gospel, upon whose memory those days of his first acquaintance with Jesus had fixed themselves in the exact succession of their incidents so indelibly, that though he writes his narrative at least forty years after the death of Christ, he writes not only as an eye-

witness, but as one who can tell day after day what happened; and no doubt the day was memorable to him, and the very hour of that day, on which he left the Baptist's side to join himself to Jesus.

John and Andrew follow Jesus. We wonder which of the two it was that made the first movement towards him. Let us believe it to have been John, that we may cherish the thought that he was the first to follow as he was the last to leave. He was one at least of the first two men who became followers of the Lamb; and that because of their having heard him described as the Lamb of God. When this first incident in his own connection with Jesus is considered, need we wonder that this epithet, "the Lamb," became so favorite a one with John; that it is in his writings, and in them alone of all the writings of the New Testament, that it is to be found, occurring nearly thirty times in the book of the Apocalypse. —

The two disciples follow Jesus silently, respectfully, admiringly—  
anxious to address him, yet unwilling to obtrude. He relieves them from their embarrassment. The instinct of that love which is already drawing them to him tells him that he is being followed for the first time by human footsteps, answering to warm-beating, anxious human hearts. He turns and says to them, "What seek ye?" A vague and general question, which left it open to them to give any answer that they pleased, to connect their movement with him or not. But their true hearts speak out. It is not any short and hurried converse by the way that will satisfy their ardent longings. They would have hours with him, days with him alone in the seclusion of his home. "Rabbi"—they say to him, the first time doubtless that Jesus was ever so addressed—"where dwellest thou? He saith to them, Come and see; and they came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour." If, in his gospel, John numbers the hours of the day according to the Jewish method of computation, then it must have been late in the afternoon, at four o'clock, having but two hours of that day to run, that Christ's invitation was given and accepted. We incline to believe, however, that John follows not the Jewish, but the Roman method of counting; and if so, then it was in the forenoon, at ten o'clock, that the two disciples accompanied our Lord. And we are the rather induced to believe so, as it gives room for the other incident, the bringing of Simon to Jesus, to happen during the same day; which, from the specific and journal-like character of this part of John's narrative, we can scarcely help conceiving that he did.

But where and whose was the abode to which Jesus conducted John and Andrew, and how were their hours employed? It could

only have been some house which the hospitality of strangers had opened for a few days' residence to one whom they knew not, and over all the intercourse that took place beneath its roof the veil is drawn. It is the earliest instance this of that studied reserve as to all the minuter details of Christ's daily life and conversation upon which we may have afterwards to offer some remarks. John has not yet learned to lay his head on that Master's bosom, but already he is sitting at his feet. And there for all day long, and on into the quiet watches of the night, would he sit drinking in our Lord's first opening of his great message of mercy from the Father. Andrew has something of the restless, active spirit of his brother in him, and so no sooner has he himself attained a sure conviction that this is indeed the Christ whom he has found, than he hurries out to seek his own brother Simon and bring him to Jesus. We should have liked exceedingly to have been present at that interview, to have stood by as Jesus for the first time looked at Simon, and Simon for the first time fixed his eyes on Jesus. The Lord looks upon Simon and sees all he is and all that he is yet to be. His great confession, his three denials, his bitter repentance, his restoration, the great services rendered, the death like that of his Master he is to die, all are present to the thoughts of Jesus as he looks. "Thou art Simon," he says at once to him, as if he had known him from his youth—"Simon, the son of Jona." This word Jona, in Hebrew, means a dove, and it has been thought, fancifully perhaps, that it was with a sidelong reference to the place of the dove's usual resort that Jesus said: "Thou art Simon the son of the dove, which seeks shelter in the rock; thou shalt be called Cephas, shalt be the rock for the dove to shelter in." On an after occasion Jesus explained more fully why it was that this new name of Peter, the Rock, was bestowed. Here we have nothing but the simple fact before us, that it was at the first meeting of the two, and before any converse whatever took place between them, that the change of name was announced; with what effect on Peter we are left to guess—his very silence, a silence rather strange to him, the only thing to tell us how deep was the impression made by this first interview with Christ.

The next day, the fifth from that on which this chronicling of the days begins, Jesus goes forth on his return to Galilee, finds Philip by the way, and saith to him, "Follow me!" Philip was of Bethsaida. Bethsaida lay at the northern extremity of the sea of Galilee, not on the line of Christ's route from Bethabara to Nazareth or Cana. We infer from this circumstance that, like John, Andrew, and Peter, Philip had left his home to attend on the ministry of the Baptist.

On the banks of the Jordan, or afterwards from one or other of his Galilean countrymen who had already joined themselves to Christ, he had learned the particulars of his earlier earthly history. Any difficulty that he might himself have had in recognizing the Messiahship of one so born and educated was soon got over, the wonder at last enhancing the faith. Finding Nathanael, Philip said to him: "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." It was a very natural reply for one who lived so near to Nazareth, and knew how insignificant a place it was, to say: "Can there any good thing"—any such good thing—"come out of Nazareth?" "Come and see!" was Philip's answer. It proved the very simplicity and docility of Nathanael's nature, that he did at once go to see. Perhaps, however, his recent exercises had prepared him for the movement. Before Philip called him, he had been under the fig-tree, the chosen place for meditation and prayer with the devout of Israel. There had he been pondering in his heart, wondering when the Hope of Israel was to come, and praying that it might be soon, when a friend comes and tells him that the very one he has been praying for has appeared. With willing spirit he accompanies his friend. Before, however, he gets close to him, Jesus says, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" How much of that very guileless spirit which we have learned to call by his name is there in Nathanael's answer! Without thinking that he is in fact accepting Christ's description of him as true, and so exposing himself to the charge of no small amount of arrogance, disproving in fact that charge by the very blindness that he shows to the expression of it, he says: "Whence knowest thou me?" Our Lord's reply, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee," we may regard as carrying more with it to the conscience and heart of Nathanael than the mere proof that Christ's eye saw what no human eye, placed as he was at the time, could have seen, but that the secrets of all hearts lay open to Him with whom he had now to do. Nathanael comes with doubting mind, but a guileless heart; and so now, without dealing with it intellectually, the doubt is scattered by our Lord's quick glance penetrating into his inner spirit, and an instant and sure faith is at once planted in Nathanael's breast.

I am apt to think from the very form of Nathanael's answer, from the occurrence in it of a phrase that does not seem to have been a Jewish synonym for the Messiah, that Nathanael too had been at the Jordan, and had heard there the testimony that John had borne to Jesus. 'Rabbi,' he says, 'thou art what I have lately heard thee



called, and wondered at their calling thee; "Thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel." ' There was something so fresh, so fervent, so full-hearted in the words, they fell so pleasantly on the ear of Jesus, that a bright vision rose before his eye of the richer things that were yet in store for all that believed on him. First, he says to Nathanael individually, "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these;" and then looking on the others, while still addressing himself to him, he adds: "Verily, verily I say unto you, hereafter, or rather from this time forward, ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man. You have heard, that a few weeks ago, on the banks of the river, the heavens opened for a moment above my head, and the Spirit was seen coming down like a dove upon me. That was but a sign. Believe what that sign was meant to confirm; believe in me as the Lamb of God, the Saviour of the world; the baptizer with the Holy Ghost, and your eye of faith shall be quickened, and you shall see those heavens standing continually open above my head—opened by me for you; and the angels of God—all beings and things that carry on the blessed ministry of reconciliation between earth and heaven, between the souls of believers below and the heavenly Father above—going up and bringing blessings innumerable down, ascending and descending upon the Son of man. Son of God—my Father called me so at my baptism, the devil tempted me as such in the desert, the Baptist gave me that name at Bethabara, and thou, Nathanael, hast bestowed it on me now once again; but the name that I now like best, and shall oftenest call myself, is that of the Son of man; and yet I am both, and in being both, truly and eternally fulfil the dream of Bethel. It was but in a dream that your father Jacob saw that ladder set up on earth, whose top reached to heaven, up and down which the angels were ever moving. It shall be in no dream of the night, but in the clearest vision of the day—in the hours when the things of the unseen world shall stand most truly and vividly revealed—you shall see in me that ladder of all gracious communication between earth and heaven, my humanity fixing firmly the one end of that ladder on earth, in my divinity the other end of that ladder lost amid the splendors of the throne."

At first sight the narrative of these five days after the temptation, which we have thus followed to its close, has but little to attract. It recounts what many might regard as the comparatively insignificant fact of the attachment of five men—all of them Galileans, none of them of any note or rank among the people—to Christ. But of

these five men, four afterwards became apostles; (all of them, indeed, if, as is believed by many of our best critics, Nathanael and Bartholomew were the same person;) and two of them, Peter and John, are linked together in the everlasting remembrance of that church which they helped to found. Had the Baptist's ministry done nothing more than prepare those five men for the reception of the Messiah, and hand them over so prepared to Jesus, to become the first apostles of the faith, it had not been in vain. These five men were the first disciples of Jesus, and in the narrative of their becoming so we have the history of the infancy of the church of the living God, that great community of the saints, that growing and goodly company, swelling out to a multitude that no man can number, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. If there be any interest in tracing the great river that bears at last on its broad bottom the vessels of many lands, to some little bubbling fountain up among the hills; if there be any interest in tracing the great monarchy whose power overshadowed the earth, to the erection of a little organized community among the Sabine hills; if the traveller regards with wonder the little gushing stream, or the historian the first weak beginnings of the Roman commonwealth; then may the same emotion be permitted to the Christian as he reads the page that tells of the first foundations being laid of a spiritual kingdom, which is to outlive all the kingdoms of this earth, and abide in its glory for ever.

Still another interest attaches to the narrative now before us. It tells us of the variety of agencies employed in bringing the first of his disciples to Christ. Two of these five men acted on the promptings of the Baptist, one of them on the direct call or summons of our Lord himself; one at the instance of a brother, one on the urgency of a friend. It would be foolish to take these cases of adherence to the Christian cause as typical or representative of the numbers brought respectively to Christ by the voice of the preacher, the word of Christ himself, and the agency of relative or acquaintance; but we cannot go wrong in regarding this variety of agency within so narrow limits, as warranting all means and methods by which any can be won to a true faith in Christ. Whatever these means and methods may be, in order to be effectual they must finally resolve themselves into direct individual address. It was in this way the first five disciples were gathered in. By John speaking to two, Jesus to one, Andrew to one, Philip to one. It is the same species of agency similarly employed which God has always most richly blessed; the direct, earnest, loving appeal of one man to his acquaintance, relative, or friend. How many are there among us who have been engaged for years

either in supporting by our liberality, or aiding by our actual service one or other of those societies whose object is to spread Christianity, but who may seldom if ever have endeavored, by direct and personal address, to influence one human soul for its spiritual and eternal good! Not till more of the spirit of Jesus and John, of Andrew and Philip, as exhibited in this passage, descend upon us, shall we rightly acquit ourselves of our duty as followers of the Lamb.

But in my mind the chief interest of the passage lies in the conduct of our Lord himself. Those five days were not only the birth-time of the church, they were the beginning of Christ's public ministry, and how does that ministry open? Silently, gently, unostentatiously; no public appearances, no great works done, no new instrumentality employed; by taking two men to live with him for a day, by asking another to follow him, by dealing wisely and tenderly and encouragingly with two others who are brought to him—so enters the Lord upon the earthly task assigned to him. Would any one sitting down to devise a career for the Son of God descending upon our earth to work out the salvation of our race, have assigned such an opening to his ministry? and yet could any thing have been more appropriate to him who came not to be ministered unto but to minister, than this turning away from being ministered unto by the angels in the desert, to the rendering of those kindly and all-important services to John and Andrew and Peter and Philip and Nathanael?

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## XI.

### THE FIRST MIRACLE.\*

“AND the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee.” Looking back to the preceding narrative, you observe that from the time of the arrival at Bethabara of the deputation from Jerusalem sent to inquire into the Baptist's character and claims, an exact note of the time is kept in recording the incidents which followed. “The next day,” that is, the first after that of the appearance of the deputation, John sees Jesus coming unto him, and points him out as the “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” “Again the next day after,” standing in company with two of his disciples, John repeats the testimony, and the two disciples followed Jesus; one of them, Andrew, going and bringing his own brother Simon, the other John, sitting at his new Master's feet. “The day follow-





THE MARRIAGE FEAST AT CANA



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ing," Jesus, setting out on his return to Galilee, findeth Philip. Philip findeth Nathanael, and so, accompanied by these five, (Andrew, John, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael,) Jesus proceeds upon his way back to his home. Occurring in a narrative like this, where the regular succession of events is so accurately chronicled, we naturally, in coming to the expression, "the third day," interpret it as meaning the third day after the one that had immediately before been spoken of, that is, the one of Christ's departure from the banks of the Jordan. Two days' easy travel carries him and his new attendants to Nazareth; but there is no one there to receive them. The mother of Jesus and his brethren are at Cana, a village lying a few miles farther to the north. Thither they follow him, and find that a marriage is being celebrated there, to the feast connected with which Jesus and his five disciples are invited. One of the five, Nathanael, belonged to Cana, and may have received the invitation on his own account as an acquaintance of the family in whose house the marriage feast was held. But the others were strangers, only known to that family as having accompanied Jesus for the last few days—their tie of discipleship to him quite a recent one, and as yet scarcely recognized by others. That on his account alone, and in consequence of a connection with him of such a kind, they should have been at once asked to be present at an entertainment to which friends and relatives only were ordinarily invited, would seem to indicate some familiar bond between the family at Nazareth and the one in which this marriage occurs. The idea of some such relationship is supported by the freedom which Mary appears to exercise, speaking to the servants not like a stranger, but as one familiar in the dwelling. Besides, if Simon, called the Canaanite, was called so because of his connection with the village of Cana, his father Alphaeus or Cleophas, who was married to a sister of Christ's mother, may have resided there, and it may have been in his family that this marriage occurred. Could we but be sure of this—which certainly is probable, and which early tradition affirms—the circumstance that when Jesus seated himself at this marriage feast he sat down at a table around which mother, and brothers and sisters, and uncle and aunt, and cousins of his own now gathered, it would give a peculiarly domestic character to the scene, and throw a new charm and interest around the miracle which was wrought at it. At any rate, we may assume that it was in a family connected by some close ties, whether of acquaintance or relationship, with that of Jesus that the marriage feast was kept.

"And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith to him, They have no wine." The wine, provided only for the original

number of guests, began to fail. Mary, evidently watching with a kind and womanly interest the progress of the feast, and perhaps ascribing the threatened exigency to the unexpected arrival of her son and his companions, becomes doubly anxious to shield a family in which she took such an interest from the painful feeling of having failed in the duties of hospitality. But why did Mary, seeing what she did, and feeling as she did, go to Jesus and say to him, "They have no wine"? That she expected him in some way to interfere is evident; but what ground had she to expect that he would do so in any such manner as he did? She had never seen him work a miracle before. She had no reason, from past experience, to believe that he would or could make wine at will, or that by his word of power he would supply the deficiency. She had, however, been laying up in her heart, and for thirty years revolving all that had been told her at the beginning about her son. She had none at Nazareth but Joseph to speak to; none but he who would have believed her had she spoken. Joseph now is dead, and she is left to nurse the swelling hope in her solitary breast. At last the period comes, when rumors of the great preacher of repentance who has appeared in the wilderness of Judea, and to whom the whole country is rushing, spread over Galilee. Her son hears them, and rises from his work, and bids her adieu; the first time that he has parted from her since she had lost him in Jerusalem, now eighteen years ago. What can be his object in leaving her, his now widowed mother? She learns—perhaps he himself tells her—that he goes with other Galileans who want to see and hear the new teacher, it may be to enroll themselves by baptism as his disciples. She asks about this new teacher. Can it be that she discovers him to be no other than the son of her relative Elisabeth, whose birth was in so strange a manner linked with that of Jesus? If so, into what a tumult of expectation must she have been thrown.

But whether knowing aught of this or not, now at last, after a two months' absence, her son rejoins her, strangely altered in his bearing; attended, too, by those who, young as he is, hail him as their Master and pay him all possible respect. She scarcely ventures to ask him what has happened in the interval of his absence; but them she fully questions; and as they tell her that John has publicly proclaimed her son to be no other than He whose coming it was his great object to announce; had pointed to him as the Lamb of God, the Son of God, the Baptizer with the Holy Ghost; as they tell that they had found in him the Messiah, the Christ, of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, and that it was as such they were

now following him—to what a pitch of joyful expectation must she have been raised. Now at last the day so long looked for has come. Men have begun to see in him, her son, the Hope of Israel. Soon all Israel shall hail him as their Messiah. Meanwhile he is here among friends and relatives; has willingly accepted the invitation given to join this marriage-feast; has lost nothing, as it would seem, of all his early kindly feelings to those around him. What will he think, what will he do, if he be told that owing to his presence, and that of his disciples, a difficulty has arisen, and discredit is likely to be thrown upon this family, which has shown itself so ready to gratify him, by asking these strangers to share in the festivities of the occasion? She thinks, perhaps, of the cruse of oil, of the barley-loaves of the old prophets. Surely if her son be that great Prophet that is to appear, he might do something to provide for this unforeseen emergency; to meet this want; to keep the heart of this poor, perhaps, but generous household from being wounded. But what shall she ask him to do? what shall she suggest? She will leave that to himself. She knows how kind in heart, how wise in counsel he is, and believes now that his power is equal to his will. She modestly contents herself with simply directing his attention to the fact, and saying to him, “They have no wine.”

It is the very delicacy of this approach and address which renders so remarkable our Lord’s reply, “Woman, what have I to do with thee?”—exactly the same form of expression which, on more than one occasion, the demons, whom he was about to dispossess, addressed to Jesus, when they said to him, “What have we to do with thee?” or, “What hast thou to do with us, Jesus, thou Son of God?” On their part such language implied a repudiation of his interference; a denial of and a desire to resist his power and authority. And what can the same form of expression mean as addressed now by Jesus to his mother? Interpret it as we may; soften it to the uttermost so as to remove any thing like harshness; still it is the language of resistance and reproof. There may have been some over-haste or impatience on Mary’s part; some motherly vanity mingling with her desire to see her son exert his power, and reveal his character before these assembled guests, which required to be gently checked; but our Lord’s main object in speaking to her as he did, was to teach Mary that the period of his subjection to her maternal authority had expired; that in the new character he had assumed, in that new sphere of action upon which he had entered, it was not for her, upon the ground simply of her relationship to him, to dictate or suggest what he should do. There was some danger of her forgetting this;



of her cherishing and acting on the belief that he was still to be her son, as he had been throughout those thirty by-past years. It was right, it was even kind, that at the very outset she should be guarded against this danger, and saved the disappointment she might have felt had the limits of her influence and authority been left vague and undefined. Jesus would, therefore, have her to know definitely, and from the beginning of his ministry, that mother though she was as to his humanity, this gave her no right to interfere with him as the Son of the Highest, the Saviour of mankind. Thus gently but firmly does he repel the bringing of her maternal relationship to bear upon his Messianic work; thus gently but firmly does he assert and vindicate his perfect independence, disengaging himself from this the closest of earthly ties, that he may stand free in all things to do only the will of his Father in heaven. This manner of his conduct to the mother whom he so tenderly loved, may be regarded as the first of those repeated rebukes which Jesus gave by anticipation to that idolatrous reverence which has carried the human bond into the spiritual kingdom; carried it even into the heavenly places; exalting Mary as the queen of heaven; seating the crowned mother on a throne sometimes on a level with, sometimes above that occupied by her Son, teaching us to pray to her as an equal intercessor with Christ.

“Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come.” With him no impatience, no undue haste, no hurrying prematurely into action. He has waited quietly those thirty years, without a single trial of that superhuman strength which lay in him, content to bide till the set time came. And now he waits, even as to the performance of his first miracle, till the right and foreseen hour for its performance has arrived. As to this act of his power, and as to every act of it; as to this incident of his life, and as to every incident of it—he could tell when the hour had not come, and when it had. He who at this marriage-feast could say to Mary, “Mine hour is not yet come,” could say to the Omniscient in the upper chamber at Jerusalem, “Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son.” Mapped out before his foreseeing eye in all its times, places, events, issues, lay the whole of his earthly life and ministry. The perfect unbroken unity of design and action running throughout the whole proclaims a previous foresight, a premeditated, well-ordered plan. It has not been so with any of those men who have played the greatest and most prominent parts on the stage of human history. Their own confessions, the story of their lives, their earlier compared with their later acts, all tell us how little they knew or thought beforehand of what they finally were to be and do. Instead of one fixed, uniform,

unchanging scheme and purpose running through and regulating the whole life, in all its lesser as well as its greater movements, there have been shiftings and changings of place to suit the shiftings and the changes of circumstances. Surprisals here, disappointments there; old instruments of action worn out and thrown away, new ones invented and employed; the life made up of a motley array of many-colored incidents, out of which have come issues never dreamed of at the beginning. Was it so with the life that Jesus lived on earth? Had he been a mere man, committing himself to a great work under the guidance of a sublime, yet purely human, and therefore weak and blind impulse, had he seen only so far into the future as the unaided human eye could carry, how much was there in the earlier period of his ministry to have excited false hopes, how much in the latter to have produced despondency! But the people came in multitudes around him, and you can trace no sign of extravagant expectation. The tide of popular favor ebbs away from him, and you see no token of his giving up his enterprise in despair. No wavering of purpose, no change of plan, no altering of his course to suit new and obviously unforeseen emergencies. There is progress: a steady advance onward to the final consummation of the cross and the burial, the resurrection and ascension; but all is consistent, all is harmonious. The attempt has been lately made, with all the resources of scholarship and all the skill of genius, to detect a discrepancy of design and expectation between the opening and closing stages of our Saviour's earthly course. It has failed. I cannot help thinking that all candid and intelligent readers of that life as we have it in the gospels, whatever be their religious opinions or prepossessions, will acknowledge that M. Renan's failure is patent and complete. If so, it leaves that life of Jesus Christ distinguished from all others by a fixed, preëstablished, unvarying design.\*

° This feature in our Lord's character appears to have strongly impressed the mind of Napoleon I., as appears from the following extracts:

"In every other life than that of Christ, what imperfections, what inconsistencies! Where is the character that no opposition is sufficient to overwhelm? Where is the individual whose conduct is never modified by event or circumstance, who never yields to the influences of the time, never accommodates himself to manners of passions that he cannot prevail to alter?

"I defy you to cite another life like that of Christ, exempt from the least vacillation of this kind, untainted by any such blots or wavering purpose. From first to last he is the same; always the same, majestic and simple, infinitely severe and infinitely gentle; throughout a life that may be said to have been lived under the public eye, Jesus never gives occasion to find fault; the prudence of his conduct compels our admiration by its union of force and gentle-

Our Lord's answer to Mary was ill-fitted, we might imagine, to foster hope, postponing apparently to an indefinite period any interposition on his part. And yet she turns instantly to the servants, and says to them: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." However surprised or perplexed she may have been, she appeared as confident as ever that he would interpose. It may have been her strong and hopeful faith which, notwithstanding the discouraging reply, sustained her expectation; or there may have been something in the tone and manner of her son, something in the way he laid the emphasis as he pronounced the words, "Mine hour is not *yet* come," which conveyed to her the impression that the hour was approaching, was near, a speedy compliance shining through the apparent refusal.

ness. Alike in speech and action, Jesus is enlightened, consistent, and calm. Sublimity is said to be an attribute of divinity; what name then shall we give to him in whose character were united every attribute of the sublime?

"I know men; and I tell you that Jesus is not a man.

"In Lycurgus, Numa, Confucius, and Mahomet, I only see legislators who having attained to the first place in the state, have sought the best solution of the social problem; I see nothing in them that reveals Divinity; they themselves have not pitched their claims so high.

"It is evident that it is only posterity that has deified the world's first despots, heroes, the princes of the nations, and the founders of the earliest republics. For my part, I see in the heathen gods and those great men, beings of the same nature with myself. Their intelligence, after all, differs from mine only in form. They burst upon the world, played a great part in their day, as I have done in mine. Nothing in them proclaims divinity: on the contrary, I see numerous resemblances between them and me, common weaknesses and errors. Their faculties are such as I myself possess; there is no difference save in the use that we have made of them, in accordance with the different ends we had in view, our different countries and the circumstances of our times.

"It is not so with Christ. Every thing in him amazes me; his spirit out-reaches mine, and his will confounds me. Comparison is impossible between him and any other being in the world. He is truly a being by himself: his ideas and his sentiments, the truth that he announces, his manner of convincing, are all beyond humanity and the natural order of things.

"His birth, and the story of his life, the profoundness of his doctrine which overturns all difficulties, and is their most complete solution, his gospel, the singularity of this mysterious being, his appearance, his empire, his progress through all centuries and kingdoms, all this is to me a prodigy, an unfathomable mystery, which plunges me into a reverie from which there is no escape, a mystery which is ever within my view, a permanent mystery which I can neither deny nor explain.

"I see nothing here of man. Near as I may approach, closely as I may examine, all remains above my comprehension, great with a greatness that crushes me; it is in vain that I reflect—all remains unaccountable." *Sentiments de Napoléon sur le Christianisme, par le CHEVALIER DE BEAUTERNE.*

But why did she give that order to the servants, or how could she anticipate that it was through their instrumentality that the approaching supply was to be conveyed? Without some hint being given, some word or look of Jesus pointing in that direction, she could scarcely have conjectured beforehand what the mode of his action was to be.

Leaving the mystery which arises here unresolved, as being left without the key to open it, let us look at the simple, easy, unostentatious way in which the succeeding miracle was wrought. There stand—at the entrance, perhaps, of the dwelling—six water-pots of stone; Jesus saith to the servants, “Fill the water-pots with water.” They did so, filling them to the brim. Jesus saith, “Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast.” They do so; it is not water, but choicest wine they bear! The ruler of the feast at once detects it as better wine than they had previously been drinking, and addresses the bridegroom. The latter gives no reply, for he does not know whence or how this new supply of better wine has come. As little know the guests who partake of it; nor, perhaps, till the feast is over, and the servants tell what has been done, is it known by what a miracle of power the festivities of that social board have been sustained. What a veiling this of the hand and power of the operator! Imagine only that Jesus had asked the servants, while the water was water still, to draw it out and fill each goblet; had asked each guest to lift up his cup and taste, and see what kind of liquid it contained; and then, by a word of his power, had turned the crystal water into the ruddy wine! With what gaping wonder would every one have then been filled! Instead of this, ordering it so that what came to the guests appeared to come through the ordinary channel, without word or touch, aught said or done, in obedience to an inward volition of the Lord, the water hidden in the vessels is changed instantaneously into wine. There was the same dignified ease and simplicity, the same absence of ostentation about all Christ’s miracles, proper to him who used not a delegated, but an intrinsic power.

Struck with the manner in which Christ met the domestic need and protected the family character, we must not overlook the largeness of the provision that he made. At the most moderate computation, the six water-pots must have held far more than enough to meet the requirements of the marriage-feast; enough of wine for that household for many months to come. In the overflowing generosity of his kindness, he does so much more than Mary would have asked or could have conceived. And still, to all who feel their need and come to him to have their spiritual wants supplied, he does exceed-



ingly abundantly above all that they ask and all that they can think.

When the governor of the feast had tasted the new-made wine, he called the bridegroom and said to him, "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now." He knew not whence that better wine had come; he knew not to whom it was they owed it; he knew not that, in contrasting as he did the custom of keeping the best wine to the last with that commonly followed at marriage-feasts he was but showing forth, as in a figure, the way in which the spiritual Bridegroom acts to all those who are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb. Not as the world giveth gives Jesus to his own. The world gives its best and richest first. At the board which it spreads the viands may not fail; nay, may even grow in number and improve in quality; but soon they pall on the sated appetite, and the end of the world's feast is always worse and less enjoyable than the beginning. Who has found it so of the provisions of a Saviour's grace—of those quiet, soothing, satisfying pleasures that true faith in him imparts? The more of these that any one receives, the more he enjoys them. The appetite grows with the food it feeds upon; the relish increases with the appetite; better and better things are still provided, and of each new cup of pleasure put into our hands, turning to the heavenly Provider, we may say, "Thou hast kept the good wine even until now."

This, the beginning of his miracles, did Jesus in Cana of Galilee. The miracle lay in the instantaneous transmutation of water into wine. And yet the water with which those water-pots were filled, and in which this change was wrought, might have been drawn from the well of a vineyard, and instead of being poured into these stone vessels, might have been poured out over the soil into which the vine-plants struck their roots, and by these roots might have been drawn up into the stem, and through the branches been distilled into the grapes, and out of the grapes been pressed into the vat, and in that vat have fermented into wine. And thus, by the many steps and secret processes of nature might that water without a miracle, as we say, have been converted into wine. But is each step or stage of that natural transmutation less wonderful? Does it show inferior wisdom? Is it done by a feeblér power? Just as little can we explain the process as spread out into multiplied details in the great laboratory of nature as when condensed into one single act. And just as much should we see the divine hand and power in the one as in the other. He who sees God in the one—the miracle, and not in

the other, the processes of nature—has not the right faith in God. If we did not believe that God was operating throughout, working everywhere, his will and power the spring and support of every movement in the material creation, we should not believe that he is operating here or there, in this miracle or in that. It is because we believe in the universal agency of the living God that we are prepared to believe in that agency in any singular form that it occasionally may take. There is, indeed, a difference between a miracle and any of the ordinary operations of nature; a difference not in the agent, not in the power, but simply in the manner in which the power and agency are employed. In the one, the hand of the great Operator works slowly, uniformly, doing the same things always in the same way; his footsteps follow each other so surely and so regularly that, by a delusion of the understanding, we come to think that the things that follow each other so uniformly are not only naturally but necessarily linked to one another—the one by some imagined inherent power drawing the other after it; needing no power but their own to bind them together at the first, or keep them bound together afterwards. Wherever there is orderly succession—and it pervades the whole universe of material things—we can classify the different processes that go on, and so reach what we call the laws of nature, which, after all, are but expressions of the orderly manner in which certain results are brought about; but to these laws, as if they were living things, and had a vital power and energy belonging to them, we come to attribute the actual accomplishment of the result. It happens thus that the works of his hands in the midst of which we live, and which, for his glory and our good, the great Creator and Sustainer makes to move on with such fixed and orderly, stately and beautiful array, instead of being a clear translucent medium through which we see him, become often as a thick obscuring veil, hiding him from our sight. Hence the use of miracles, that He who worketh all in all, and worketh thus, should sometimes break as it were this order, that through the rent we might see the hand which had been hidden behind that self-constructed veil.

And yet when we speak thus of a miracle as a breaking-in upon the ordinary and established course of nature, let us not think of it as if it were discord thrust into a harmony; something loose, irregular, disjointed, coming in to mar the beautiful and orderly progression. In that harmonious progression, the lower ever yields to the higher. The vital powers, for instance, in plants and animals, are ever modifying the mechanical powers, the laws of motion; the will of man comes in, in still more striking manner, to do the same thing

with all the powers and processes of nature. You do not say that such crossings and counteractions of lower by higher laws disturb the harmony of nature; they help to constitute it. And we believe that just as falsely as you would say that the order of nature was broken, the law of gravitation was violated, when the sap ascends in the stem of the tree, and is distributed upwards through its branches; just as falsely is it said of the miracles of Christianity, that they break that order, or violate any of nature's laws; for did we but know enough of that spiritual kingdom for whose establishment and advancement they were wrought, we should perceive that here too there was law and order, and that what we now call miracles were but instances of the lower yielding to the higher; that the grand, unbroken harmony of the vast universe, material, mental, moral, spiritual, may be sustained and promoted.

This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory. The glory that was thus revealed lay not so much in the forthputting of almighty power (for it is an inferior glory that the bare exercise of any power, though it be divine, displays) as in the manner in which the power is exercised, the ends it is put forth to accomplish. Power appears here as the handmaid and minister of loving kindness, and gathers thus a richer glory than its own around it. Never let us forget that the first act of our Lord's public life was to grace a marriage by his presence. By doing so, he has for ever consecrated that and every other human bond and relationship. And the first exercise of his almighty power was to minister to the enjoyment of a marriage-feast. He who would not in the extremity of hunger employ his power to procure food for himself, put it forth to increase the comforts of others. By doing so, he has for ever consecrated all the innocent enjoyments of life. It will not do to say that his example here is no pattern to us; that what was safe for him might be injurious to us; for he not only accepted the invitation for himself, but took his disciples along with him to the marriage-feast. There is something peculiarly striking and instructive in our Lord's coming so directly from consort with the austere ascetic preacher of the wilderness, and carrying along with him these first disciples, the majority of whom had been John's disciples before they were his, and seating them by his side at this festive board. Does it not teach what the genius and spirit of his religion is? That it affects not the desert; that it shuns not the fellowship of man; that it frowns not on social joys and pleasures; that it rejoices as readily with those who rejoice as it weeps with those who weep; ready to be with us in our hours of gladness, as well as in our hours

of grief. Let no table be spread to which He who graced the marriage-feast at Cana could not be invited; let no pleasure be indulged in which could not live in the light of his countenance. Let his presence and blessing be with us and upon us wherever we go and however we are engaged; and is the way not open by which the miracle of Cana may, in spirit, be repeated daily still, and the water of every earthly enjoyment turned into the very wine of heaven?

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## XII.

### THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE.\*

THE miracle at the marriage-feast drew a marked line of distinction between the divine Teacher and the austere Essenes, those eremites who dwelt apart, shut up in a kind of monastic seclusion, and who renounced the use of wine, condemned marriage, and denounced all bodily indulgence as injurious to the purity of the spirit. By acting as he did at Cana, Jesus at the very outset of his career placed himself in direct opposition to the strictest class of pietists then existing—in direct opposition to the spirit and practice of those in all ages who have sought, by withdrawal from the world and estrangement from all objects of sense, to cultivate communion with the unseen, to rise to a closer intercourse with and nearer resemblance to the Deity.

One effect of this first display by Jesus of his supernatural power was a strengthening of the faith of the men who had recently attached themselves to him. "His disciples," it is said, "believed in him." They had believed before, but they believed more firmly now. The ground of their first faith had been the testimony of the Baptist. Their faith had grown during the few days of private intercourse with Jesus which succeeded, and now by the manifestation of his power and glory it was still more strengthened. It was still, as later trial too clearly proved, weak and imperfect. But their minds and hearts were in such a condition that they lay open to the influence of additional light as to their Master's character, additional evidence of his authority and power. But there were other spectators of the miracle upon whom it exerted no such happy influence. After the marriage-feast at Cana broke up, "Jesus and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples went down to Capernaum." This is the first mention of those brethren of Christ who appear more than once in

\* John 2 : 12-21 ; Matt. 21 : 10-17.



the subsequent history, always associated with Mary, as forming part of her family, carefully distinguished from the apostles and disciples of the Lord. They are represented on one occasion as going out after him, thinking he was beside himself; and when he was told that Mary and they stood at the outskirts of the crowd desiring to see him, he exclaimed, "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? Whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." On another occasion, the Nazarenes referred to them when, astonished and offended, they said to one another, "Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary, and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us?" John tells us that at a still later period, in the beginning of the last year of our Lord's ministry, these relatives taunted him, "saying, If thou do these things, show thyself to the world; for neither did his brethren believe in him." Had we been reading these passages for the first time, we should scarcely have understood them otherwise than as referring to those who were related to Jesus as children of the same mother. This would of course imply that Mary had other children than Jesus, an idea to which from the earliest period there seems to have been the strongest repugnance. Resting upon the well-known usage which allowed the term brother and sister to be extended to more distant relationships, and upon the acknowledged difficulty which arises in connection with the names of our Lord's brothers as given by the evangelists, both the Greek and the Latin churches, though adopting different theories as to the exact nature of the relationship, have indignantly repudiated the idea of Mary's having any but one child, and have regarded those spoken of as his brothers as being either his half-brothers, sons of Joseph by another marriage, or his cousins, the children of Mary's sister, the wife of Alphæus or Cleophas. It would be out of place here to enter upon the discussion of this difficult question. I can only say that, after weighing all the objections which have been adduced, I can see no sufficient reason for rejecting the first and most natural reading of the passages I have referred to, for not believing that they were brothers and sisters of Jesus, who grew up along with him in the household at Nazareth. Perhaps our readiness to admit this may partly spring from our not sharing the impression that there is any thing in such a belief either derogatory to the character of Mary, or to the true dignity of her first-born Son.

Whoever they were, and however related to him, these brethren of the Lord, his nearest relatives, who had all along been living, if

not under the same roof, yet in close and intimate acquaintance with him, sat beside his disciples at that marriage-feast, and saw the wonder that was done, and they did not believe. As months rolled on, they saw and heard of still greater wonders wrought in the presence of multitudes. Residing with Mary at Capernaum, they lived in the very heart of that commotion which the teaching and acts of Jesus excited. Neither did they then believe. Their unbelief may have been in part sustained by Christ's having ceased to make their home his home, and chosen twelve strangers as his close and constant companions and friends. Nor did any of them believe in Jesus all through the three years of his ministry. But it is pleasing to note that, though so long and so stubbornly maintained, their unbelief did at last give way; you see them in that upper room to which the apostles retired after witnessing the ascension: "And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter and James, and John and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphæus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." How many an apt remark on the peculiar barriers which the closer ties of domestic life often oppose to the influence of the one Christian member of a household, and on the peculiar encouragement which such a one has to persevere, might be grounded upon the fact that it was not till after his death that our Lord's own immediate relatives believed in him.

When the marriage-feast at Cana was over, Jesus and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples went down to Capernaum. Of this town we shall have more to say hereafter, when it became the chosen centre of our Lord's Galilean ministry. One advantage of the short visit that Jesus now paid to it was, that it put him on the route along which the already gathering bands of visitors from Northern Galilee passed southwards to the capital. The Passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Hitherto, though some time had passed (two or three months perhaps, but there are no materials for exactly determining) since his baptism and the public proclamation of his Messiahship, Jesus had taken no public step, none implying any assumption on his part of the office to which he had been designated. Of the few men who attended him, there was but one whom he had asked to follow him; nor was it yet understood whether he and the rest were to accompany him for more than a few days. The miracle at Cana was rather of a private and domestic than of a public character. Nothing that we know of was said or done by

Jesus at Capernaum, or throughout the short visit to Galilee, to indicate his entrance on a public career.

But now he is in Jerusalem, in the place where most appropriately the first revelation of himself in his new character is made. Let us acknowledge that it is not in the form in which we should have expected it; nor in that form in which any Jew of that age would ever have imagined that the Messiah would first show himself. We may be able, by meditating a little upon it, to see more of its suitableness than at first sight appears. But even a first glance reveals how utterly unlike it was to the popular Jewish conception of the advent of the Messiah. One of the first things our Lord does at Jerusalem is to go up into the temple. He passes through one of the gates of its surrounding walls. He enters into the large open area which on all sides encompasses the sacred edifice. What a spectacle meets his eye! There all round, attached to the walls, are lines of booths or shops in which money-changers are plying their usurious trade. The centre space is crowded with oxen and with sheep exposed for sale, and between the buyers and the sellers all the turbulent traffic of a cattle-market is going on. It goes on within the outer enclosure, but close upon the inner courts of the holy place; so close that the loud hum from the crowded court of the Gentiles must have been heard to their no small disturbance by the priests and worshippers within. How comes all this? and who is responsible for this desecration of the temple? The origin of it in one sense was natural enough. At all the great festivals, but especially at the Passover, an almost inconceivable number of animals were offered up in sacrifice. Josephus tells us of more than two hundred thousand victims sacrificed in the course of a single Passover celebration. The greatest proportion of these were not brought up from the country by the offerers, but were purchased on their arrival at Jerusalem. An extensive traffic, yielding no inconsiderable gain to those engaged in it, was thus created. Some open area for conducting it was needed. The heads of the priesthood, to whom the custody of the temple was committed, saw that good rents were got for any suitable market-ground which the city could supply. They were tempted to fill their own coffers from this source. Jerusalem could furnish no place so suitable for the exposure of the animals as the Court of the Gentiles. What more convenient than that the victims should be purchased in the very neighborhood of the place where they were to be offered up? The greed of gain prevailed over all care for the sanctity of the temple. The Court of the Gentiles was let out to the cattle-dealers, and a large amount was thus added to the yearly revenue

of the temple. Still another source of gain lay open, and was taken advantage of. Every one who came up to the Passover, and desired to take part in the festival, had to present a half-shekel of Jewish money to the priests. This kind of money was not now in general use; it was scarce even in Judea, unknown beyond that land. Nothing, however, but the half-shekel of the sanctuary would be taken at the temple. To supply themselves with the needed coin, visitors had to go to the money-changer. And where can he find a fitter place to erect his booth and set out his table than within the very area in which the larger traffic was going on? He offers so much to the priesthood to be permitted to do so; the bribe is taken, and the booth and the tables are erected. And so, amid a perfect Babel of tongues, and thronging, jostling crowds of men and beasts, the buying and the selling and the money-changing are all going on.

Into the heart of this tumultuous throng Jesus enters. Of the many hundreds there, few have ever seen him before; few know anything about him, either about his baptism in the Jordan or his late miracle at Cana. He appears as a stranger, a young man clad in the simple garb of a Galilean peasant, without any badge of authority in his hand. He looks around with an eye of indignant sorrow, pours out the changers' money, overthrows their tables, forming a scourge of small cords drives the herds of cattle before him, and, mingling consideration with his zeal, says to them who sold the doves, "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise." Why is it that at the touch of this slender scourge, and the bidding of this youthful stranger, buyers and sellers stop their traffic, the money-changers suffer their money to be rudely handled and their tables to be overturned? The slightest resistance of so many against one would have been sufficient to arrest the movement. But no such resistance is attempted, no opposition is made, by men not likely from their occupation to be remarkable for mildness of disposition or pliability of character. How are we to explain this? We can understand how, at the last Passover, at the close of his ministry, when Jesus, then so well known, so generally recognised by the people as a prophet, repeated this cleansing of the temple, there should have been a yielding to his authoritative command. But what are we to say of such an occurrence taking place at the very commencement of his ministry, his first public act in Jerusalem? It is a mysterious power which some men, in time of excitement, by look and word and tone of command, can exercise over their fellow-men. But grant that rare power in its highest degree to Jesus, it will scarce account for this scene in the court



of the Gentiles at Jerusalem. It would seem as if, in eye and voice and action, the divine power and authority that lay in Jesus broke forth into visible manifestation, and laid such a spell upon those rough cattle-drivers and those cold calculators of the money-tables, that all power of resistance was for the time subdued. It would seem as if it pleased him to exert here within the temple the same influence that he did afterwards in the garden, when he stepped forth from the darkness into the full moonlight, and said to the rough band that advanced with lanterns and swords and staves to take him, "I that speak unto you am he;" and when at the sight and word they reeled backward and fell to the ground. The effect in both cases was but temporary. High priests and officers were soon upon their feet again; and, wondering at their own weakness in yielding to a power which at the moment they were impotent to resist, proceeded to lay hold upon Jesus and lead him away unto Caiaphas. So was it also, we believe, in the temple court. A sudden, mysterious, irresistible power is upon that crowd. They yield, they know not why. But by-and-by the spell would seem to be withdrawn. They soon recover from its effect. Nor is it long till, wondering at their having allowed a single man, and one who had no right whatever, to interfere with arrangements made by the chief authorities, and to lord it over them, they return, resume their occupations, and all goes on as before.

It was with no intention or expectation of putting an end in this way to the desecration of the holy place that Jesus acted. What, then, was the purpose of his act? It was meant to be a public proclamation of his Sonship to God: an open assertion and exercise of his authority as sustaining this relation; a protest in his Father's name against the conduct of the priesthood in permitting this desecration of the holy place. It was far more for the priesthood than for the crowd in the market-place that it was meant. They were not ignorant that the chief object of the ministry of the Baptist, with which the whole country was ringing, was to announce the immediate coming of the Messiah. They had not long before sent a deputation to the banks of the Jordan to ask John whether he himself were not the Messiah whose near advent he was foretelling. The members of that deputation heard of the baptism of Jesus; in all likelihood they had not left the place when Jesus came back from the temptation in the wilderness, and was publicly pointed to by John as the greater than himself who was to come after him, the Lamb of God, the Son of God. From the lips of the men whom they had sent, or from the lips of others, they must have known all

about what had happened. And now here among them is this Jesus of Nazareth; here he is come up to the temple, speaking and acting as if it were his part and office authoritatively to interpose and cleanse the building of all its defilements. What else could the priesthood who had charge of the temple understand than that here was claimed a jurisdiction in regard to it superior to their own? What else could they understand when the words were heard, or were repeated to them, "Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise," than that here was one who claimed a relationship to God as his Father, and a right over the temple as his Father's house, which none but *One* could claim? They go to him, therefore, or they call him before them, and entering, you will remark, into no justification of their own deed in hiring out the temple court as they had done—entering into no argument with him as to the rightness or wrongness of what he had done, rather admitting that if he were indeed a prophet, as his acts showed that he at least pretended to be, his act was justifiable; they proceed upon the assumption that he was bound to give to them some proof of his carrying a Divine commission, and they say to him, "What sign showest thou unto us, seeing thou doest these things?"

He had shown a good enough sign already, had they read it aright. He was about to show signs numerous and significant enough in the days that immediately succeeded; but to such a haughty challenge as this, coming, as he knew, from men whom no sign would convince of his Messiahship, he had but this reply: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." A truly dark saying; one that, not only they did not and could not at the time understand, but that they were almost certain to misunderstand, and, misunderstanding, to turn against the speaker, as if he meant to claim the possession of a power which he never could be called upon to exercise. Then said the Jews, interpreting, as they could scarce fail to do, his words as applicable to the material temple: "Forty-and-six years has this temple been in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?"\*

Jesus made no attempt to rectify the error into which his ques-

\* It is curious that, in saying so, they have left to us one of the few fixed and certain data upon which we can determine the year when the public ministry of our Lord began. We know that the building, or rather rebuilding of the temple, was commenced by Herod in the eighteenth year of his reign; that is—speaking according to the Roman method of counting their years, from the foundation of Rome—during the year that began in the spring of 734, and ended in that of 735. Forty-six years from this would bring us to the year 780-781. Historical statements and astronomical calculations conspire to prove that it must have been

tioners had fallen. He could not well have done so without a premature disclosure of his death and resurrection, a thing that he carefully avoided till the time of their accomplishment drew near. He left this mysterious saying to be interpreted against himself. It seems to have taken a deep hold, to have been widely circulated, and to have fixed itself very deeply in the memory of the people. Three years afterwards, when they were trying to convict him of some crime in reference to religion, this first saying of his was brought up against him, as one uttered blasphemously against the temple; but the two witnesses could not agree about the words. And when the cross was raised, those who passed by railed on him, saying, "Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself." Whatever differences there were in the remembrances and reports of the people, in one thing they agreed, in the attributing the destruction of the temple that Jesus had spoken of here, to himself. But he had not spoken of the destruction as effected by his own hands, but by those of the Jews themselves. And he had not had in his eye the material temple on Mount Moriah, but the temple of his body, which they were to destroy, and which he, three days afterwards, was to raise from the dead. All this became plain afterwards, and went, when his real meaning stood revealed in the event, mightily to confirm the faith of his followers. And in one respect it may still go to confirm ours, for does not that saying of Jesus, uttered so early—his first word, we may say, to the leaders of the people at Jerusalem—does it not, along with so many other like evidences, go to prove how clearly the Lord saw the end from the beginning?

The temple at Jerusalem has long been in ruins. In its stead there stands now before us the church of the body of Christ, the society of the faithful. In her corporate capacity, in her corporate actings, has the church not acted over again what the Jews did with their temple, when she has made merchandise of her offices and her revenues, and sold them to the highest bidder, as you would sell oxen in the market or meat in the shambles? The spirit which prompts such open sacrilegious acts, such gross making gain of godliness, is the self-same spirit which our Lord rebuked; and how often does it creep into and take hold and spread like a defiling leprosy over the house of God! It does so in the pulpit, whenever self, in one or other of its insidious forms, frames the speech and animates the

between the 13th March and the 4th April, in the year 750, that Herod died. If Christ were born a few months before that death, thirty years forward from that time brings us to the year 780, as that in which our Lord's ministry commenced; the two independent computations thus singularly confirming one another.

utterance; it does so in the pew, when in the hour hallowed to prayer and praise the chambers of thought and imagery within are crowded with worldly guests. Know ye not, brethren, that ye are the temple of God; and that the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are? Would that half the zeal the Saviour showed in cleansing the earthly building were but shown by each of us in the purifying and cleansing of our hearts! Truly it is no easy task to drive out thence every thing that defileth in his sight, to keep out as well as to put out; for, quick as were those buyers and sellers of old in coming back to their places in the temple and resuming their occupations there, quicker still are those vain and sinful desires, dispositions, imaginations, which in our moments of excited zeal we have expelled from our hearts, in returning to their old and well-loved haunts. The Lord of the temple must come himself to cleanse it; come, not once or twice as in the case of the temple at Jerusalem; come, not as a transient visitor, but as an abiding guest; not otherwise than by his own indwelling shall these unhallowed inmates be ejected and kept without, and the house made worthy of Him who deigns to occupy it.

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### XIII.

#### THE CONVERSATION WITH NICODEMUS.\*

CHRIST'S first visit to Jerusalem, after his baptism, appears to have been a brief one: not longer, perhaps, than that usually paid by those who went up to the Passover. Besides the cleansing of the temple he wrought some miracles which are left unrecorded, but which we may believe were of the same kind as his subsequent ones, and these were generally miracles of healing. Many believed on him when they saw those miracles performed; believed on him as a wonder-worker, as a man who had the great power of God at his command; but their faith scarcely went farther, involved in it little or no recognition of his true character and office. Although they believed in him, Jesus did not believe in them (for it is the same word which is used in the two cases.) Knowing what was in them, as he knew what was in all men, undeceived by appearance or profession, he entered into no close or friendly relations with them; made no hasty or premature discovery of himself.

But there was one man to whom he did commit himself on the occasion of this first and short residence in Jerusalem, to whom he

\* John 3:1-21.



did make such a discovery of himself, as we shall presently see he never made to any other single person in the whole course of his ministry. This was a man of the Pharisees, one of the sect that became the most bitter persecutors of Christ; a ruler too of the Jews, a man well educated, of good position, and in high office; a member of the Sanhedrim. He was one of the body that not long ago had sent the deputation down to the Jordan to inquire about the Baptist. He knew all about John's ministry, about his announcing that the kingdom of God was at hand, that there was One coming after him who was to baptize not with water but with the Holy Ghost. He had been wondering what this ministry of John could mean, when Jesus appeared in the city, cleansed the temple, wrought those miracles. He saw that among the class to which he belonged, the appearance and acts of the young Nazarene, who had assumed and exercised such an authority within the courts of the temple, and when challenged had given such an unsatisfactory reply, had excited nothing but distrust and antipathy; a distrust and antipathy, however, in which he did not, could not share. He could not concur with those who spake of him as an ignorant rustic, a mere blind zealot, whom a fit of fanaticism had driven to do what he did in the temple; still less could he agree with those who spake of him as an impostor, a deceiver of the people. We do not know what words of Christ's he heard, what acts of his he witnessed; but the impression had come upon him, whencesoever it came, that he was altogether different from what his fellow-rulers were disposed to believe. Could this indeed be the man of whom John spake so much; could this be indeed the Christ, the Messiah for whom so many were longing? If he was, what new and higher truths would he unfold, what a glorious kingdom would he usher in! Restless and unsatisfied with things as they were, all his Pharisaic strictness in the keeping of the law having failed to quiet his conscience and give comfort to his heart, Nicodemus was looking about and longing for further light. Perhaps this stranger, who was come to Jerusalem, may be able to help him. He may be poor and mean, a Galilean by birth, without official rank or authority; but what of that, if he be really what he seems, one clothed with a divine commission; what of that, if he can quench in any way this thirst of heart and soul which burns within? If He could be seen by him alone, Jesus would surely lay aside that reserve which he appeared to maintain, and instruct him fully as to the mysteries of the coming kingdom. But how should such a private interview be brought about? He might send for Him; and sent for by one in his position, Jesus might not refuse to come. But then it would be noised abroad

that he had been entertaining the Nazarene in his dwelling. Or he might go to Him when He was teaching in public, but then it would be seen and known of all men that he had paid Him an open mark of respect. He was not prepared to face either of these alternatives; he was too timid, thought too much of what his companions and friends and the general public of the city might think or say. Yet he is too eager to throw the chance away. He must see Jesus, and as his fears keep him from going to or sending for him by day, he goes by night, breaks in upon his retirement, asks and obtains the audience.

There was something wrong, no doubt, in his choosing such a time and way for the interview. It would have been a manlier, more heroic thing for him to have braved all danger, and risen above all fear of man. But whatever blame we may choose on this ground to attach to Nicodemus, let it not obscure our perception of his obvious honesty and earnestness, his intense desire for further enlightenment, his willingness to receive instruction. He came by night, but he was the only one of his order who came at all. He came by night, but it was not to gratify an idle curiosity, but in the disquiet of a half-awakened conscience to seek for peace. "Rabbi," he says, as soon as he finds himself in Christ's presence. He salutes him with all respect. The Rabbis of the temple would have scorned the claim of one so young in years, unknown in any of their schools, who had given no proof of his acquaintance with their laws and their traditions—to be regarded as one of them. But the ruler, in all likelihood by many years Christ's senior, and one who on other grounds might have counted on being the saluted rather than the saluter, does not hesitate to address him thus: "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him." He shows at once his respect, his candor, his intelligence, and his faith. He does not doubt that these are real miracles which Jesus has been working; he is ready to trace to its true source the power employed in their accomplishment; he is prepared at once to acknowledge that the worker of such miracles must be one sent and sanctioned by God. In saying so, he knows that he is saying more than perhaps any other man of his station in Jerusalem would be ready to say. He thinks that he says enough to win for himself a favorable reception. Yet, he is speaking far below the truth, much under his own half-formed conceptions and beliefs. It is but as a teacher, not as a prophet, much less the great Prophet, that he addresses Jesus.

One might have expected that, having addressed him as such, he would go on to put the questions to which he presumed that such a

teacher could give replies. But he pauses, perhaps imagining that, gratified by such a visit, pleased at being saluted thus by one of the rulers, Jesus will salute him in return, and save him the trouble of inquiry by making some disclosures of the new doctrine which, as a teacher sent from God, he had come to teach; or by telling him something more about that new kingdom which so many were expecting to see set up. How surprised he must have been when so abruptly, yet so solemnly, without exchange of salutation or word of preface, Jesus says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Such a man as Nicodemus could scarcely have been so stupid as to believe that in speaking of being born again, Jesus meant a second birth of the body. He is so disconcerted, however, disappointed, perplexed, besides being perhaps a little irritated, by both the manner and the substance of the grave, emphatic utterance—one which, however general in its terms, was obviously spoken with a direct and personal reference—that, in his confusion, he seizes upon the expression as the only one that had as yet conveyed any definite idea to his mind—as affording him some ground of exception, some material for reply; and taking it in its literal sense, he says: "How can a man be born again when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" The wise and gentle teacher in whose hands he now is, takes no notice of the folly or the petulance of the remark. He reiterates what he had said, modifying, however, his expressions, so that Nicodemus could not fail to see of what kind of second birth it was that he was speaking: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Had Nicodemus only had time at first to collect his thoughts, he would have remembered that it was no new term, framed now for the first time, that Jesus had been employing in speaking of a second birth; it being a proverbial expression with his countrymen with reference to those who became proselytes to the Jewish faith, and were admitted as such into the Jewish community, that they were as men new born. The outward mode of admitting such proselytes to the enjoyment of Jewish privileges was by baptism, by washing with water. John had adopted this rite, and by demanding that all Jews should be baptized with the baptism of repentance, as a preparation on their part for the coming of the kingdom, he had in fact, already proclaimed, that, as every heathen man became as a new man on entering into the commonwealth of Israel, so every Jewish man must become a new man before entering into that new kingdom which



the Messiah was to introduce and establish. It was virtually to symbolize the importance and necessity of repentance—that change of mind and heart which formed the burden of his preaching, as a qualification in all candidates for admission into the kingdom—that John came baptizing with water. But he took great pains to inform his hearers that, while he baptized with water, there was One coming immediately who was to baptize with the Holy Ghost. Was it likely then, or we may even say was it possible that, when Nicodemus now heard Jesus say, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,” he could fail to perceive the allusion to the water-baptism of John and the Spirit-baptism of the Messiah? In common with all his countrymen, Nicodemus had assumed that, be it what it might, come how or when it might, the Messianic kingdom would be one within which their very birth as Jews would entitle them to be ranked. This popular delusion John had already, by his baptism and his teaching, done something to rectify. The full truth it was reserved for Jesus to proclaim, and he does it now to Nicodemus. This master in Israel has come to Jesus to be taught; let him know then that it is not a new doctrine, but a new life which Jesus has come to proclaim and to impart. It is not by knowing so much, or believing in such truths, or practising such duties, that a man is to qualify himself for becoming a subject of the spiritual kingdom of Jesus Christ. First of all, as a necessary preliminary, he must be born again; born of the Spirit, have spiritual life imparted, before he can see so as to apprehend its real nature, before he can enter so as to partake of its true privileges, the kingdom of God. This kingdom is not an outward or a national one, not the kingdom of a creed, or of an external organized community. It is a kingdom exclusively of the new-born—of those who have been begotten of the Spirit—of those who have been born again, not of blood, nor of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. For that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

A mystic thing it looks to Nicodemus, this second birth—this birth of the Spirit; secret, invisible, impalpable; its origin and issues hidden, remote. “Marvel not,” says Jesus, at its mysteriousness. The night is quiet around you, not a sound of bending branch or rustling leaf comes from the neighboring wood; but now the air is stirred as by an invisible hand; the sigh of the night breeze comes through the bending branches and rustling leaves; you hear the sound; but who can take you to that breeze’s birthplace, and show you where and how it was begotten; who can carry you to its place of sepulture, and



show you where and how it dies? Not that the wind—the air in motion—is a whit more wilful or capricious, or less obedient to fixed laws than any other elements, or is chosen upon that account to represent the operations of God's Spirit on the souls of men. All its movements are fixed and orderly; but as the movements of an invisible agent, they elude our observation; nor, if you sought for a material emblem of that hiddenness with which the Holy Spirit works, could you find in the whole creation one more apt than that which Jesus used, when he said to Nicodemus, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Already a dim apprehension of that for which he was being apprehended of Christ has begun to dawn upon Nicodemus. He receives the truth as affirmed by Jesus as to the necessity of the new birth. He begins even to understand something as to its nature. Yet a haze still hangs over it. He wonders and he doubts—giving expression to his feelings in the question, "How can these things be?"

If Christ's answer may be taken as the best interpretation of this question, Nicodemus was now troubling himself not so much either with the nature or the necessity of the new birth, as with the manner of its accomplishment; the kind of instrumentality by which so great an inward change was to be effected; for, read aright, our Lord's reply is not only a description of that instrumentality, but an actual employment of it. First, however, a gentle rebuke must be given: 'Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Hast thou forgotten all that is written in the book of the law and in the prophets about the coming of those days in which the Lord would pour out his Spirit upon all flesh; about the new covenant that the Lord would then enter into with his people, one of whose two great provisions was to be this: "I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh"?' Ezek. 11:19. What had so often and so long beforehand been thus spoken of was now about to be executed. The Spirit of God was waiting to do his gracious work, in begetting many sons and daughters to the Lord. Let Nicodemus be assured of this, on the testimony of one whose knowledge of the spirit-world was immediate and complete. He had spoken very confidently about his knowledge of Jesus. "We know," he had said, "thou art a teacher sent from God." Let him listen now to words of equal confidence, which no mere human teacher, though he were even sent by God, could well, upon such a subject, have

employed: "Verily, verily I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness." 'This work of the Spirit in regenerating is connected with another—my own—in redeeming. The one is but an earthly operation; a work performed within men's souls; but the other, how high have you to rise to trace it to its source; how far to go to follow it to its issues? "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?"

'And yet who can speak of these heavenly things as I can do? You take me, Nicodemus, to be a teacher sent from God, perhaps you might even acknowledge me as a prophet; but know me that I am no other than He, the Son of man, the Son of God, coming down from heaven, ascending to heaven, but leaving not heaven behind me in my descent, bringing it along with me; while here on earth, being still in heaven. No man, I say unto thee, hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.'

And having thus proclaimed the ground and certainty of his knowledge of all the earthly and all the heavenly things pertaining to the kingdom, Jesus goes on to preach his own gospel beforehand to Nicodemus, taking the lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness as the type to illustrate his own approaching lifting up on the cross, declaring this to be the great and gracious design of his death, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have eternal life: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

It does not fall within our scope to illustrate at large or attempt to enforce the great truths about the one and only manner of entering into Christ's spiritual kingdom; about the universal need of the Spirit-birth in order to make this entrance; about his own character and office; the manner and objects of his death; the faith which, trusting to him, brings with it everlasting life; the moral guilt that lies in the act of rejecting him as a Redeemer; the true character of those tempers of mind and heart which prompt to faith on the one side and to unbelief on the other, which are all brought out in the discourse of our Lord to Nicodemus. But it does fall precisely within our present design that I ask you to reflect a moment or two—first, upon the time at which this discourse was delivered; and next, as to its effect upon him to whom it was addressed.

It was delivered weeks or months before the Sermon on the Mount, or any other of Christ's public addresses to the people.

Standing in time the first, it stands in character alone. You search in vain through all the subsequent discourses of our Lord for any such clear, compendious, comprehensive development of the Christian salvation: of its source in the love of the Father; its channel in the death of his only begotten Son; and of the great Agent by whom it is appropriated and applied. You search in vain for any other instance in which the three persons of the Trinity were spoken of by our Lord consecutively and conjunctly; to each being assigned his proper part in the economy of our redemption. It may even be doubted whether, in the whole range of the apostolic epistles, there be a passage of equal length in which the manner of our salvation through Christ is as fully and distinctly described.

Delivered thus at the very beginning of our Lord's ministry, it utters a loud and unambiguous protest against the error of those who would have us to believe that there was a decided and essential difference between the earlier and later teachings of our Saviour; between the doctrine taught by Christ and that taught afterwards by his apostles. It is quite true that, until within a few months of the final decease accomplished at Jerusalem, our Lord studiously avoided all reference to his death. It is quite true that, in not a single instance—not even where one would most naturally have expected it—in the prayer that he taught to his disciples—is there an allusion by Jesus to that death, as supplying the ground of our forgiveness. But that this marked silence is misinterpreted, when it is inferred that he did not assign to it that place and importance given to it afterwards, we have here, in this discourse to Nicodemus, the most convincing proof. I shall have occasion hereafter to refer to those considerations by which our Saviour was obviously influenced during the course of his personal ministry in not publicly unfolding the doctrine of the cross. Let those, however, who delight to dwell on the simple and pure morality of the Sermon on the Mount, and to contrast it with the doctrinal theology of the apostles, declaring their preference for the teachings of the Master above that of his disciples, but ponder well this first of all our Lord's discourses, and they will see that instead of any conflict there is a perfect harmony.

But if he never afterwards unfolded his gospel so plainly or so fully, why did he do so now? why reveal so much to Nicodemus that he appears to have withheld from the multitude? Am I wrong in regarding this as due in part to the very circumstance that this was a nocturnal and a solitary interview with Nicodemus? No one but this ruler of the Jews may have heard the words that Jesus spake that night, and he would be the last man to go and repeat them to

others. There is good reason to believe that the Gospel of St. John was written and published some years after those of the other evangelists. It is in the Gospel of St. John alone that the interview with Nicodemus is recorded. The other evangelists appear to have been ignorant of it. How the beloved disciple came to his knowledge of it it is not necessary for us to inquire. He may have received it from the lips of Nicodemus himself. Enough for us to know that it was not currently reported in the church till St. John gave it circulation. At any rate, we may be sure that it remained unknown all through the period of our Lord's own life. It was not, then, in violation of the rule that he acted on afterwards that he spoke now so plainly and fully as he did to Nicodemus. It was a rare opportunity, one that never perhaps returned, to have before him one so qualified by capacity, by acquirement, by honesty, by earnestness, to receive the truth; and the very manner in which the Saviour hastened to reveal it is to us the proof that he saw good soil here into which to cast the seed, and the proof too how grateful to him the office of his hand in sowing it.

He knew, indeed, that the seed then sown was long to be dormant. For three years there was no token of its germination. Nicodemus never sought a second interview with Jesus, but kept studiously aloof. Once, indeed, and it is the only sight throughout three years that we get of him, he ventured to say a word in the Council against a hasty arrest and condemnation of Jesus, but he met with such a sharp rebuff that he never opened his lips again. The memorable words, however, of the midnight meeting at Jerusalem had not been forgotten. There was much in them that he could not understand. Who was He who had spoken of himself as the Son of man, the Son of God? of his ascending and descending to and from heaven? of being in heaven even when he stood there on earth? He had spoken of his being lifted up, that men might believe in him, and believing, might not perish, but have everlasting life. What could that lifting up of Jesus be, and how upon it could there hang such issues? Much to perplex here, yet much to stimulate; for that life, that eternal life, of which Christ had spoken, was the very life that above all things he was longing to possess and realize. In this troubled state of mind and heart, with what an anxious eye would Nicodemus watch the after-current of our Lord's history! For a year and a half he had disappeared from Judea; was heard of only as saying and doing wonders down in Galilee. Then came the final visit to the capital, the great commotion in the temple, the raising of Lazarus, the seizure, the trial, the condemnation. Was Nicodemus present with the rest



of the Council of which he was a member, on the morning of the crucifixion? If he was, he must ingloriously have kept silence, for the vote was unanimous. I would rather believe, from what happened on the after part of the day, that he was not present; did not obey the hasty summons. With him or without him, the verdict is given. The license to crucify is extorted from the vacillating governor; the cross is raised. At last the words that three years before had sounded in the ruler's listening ear, and which had since been frequently recalled, the mystery of their meaning unrevealed, are verified and explained. The cross is raised; Jesus is lifted up. The darkened heavens, the reeling earth, the prayer for his crucifiers, the promise to the penitent who dies beside him, the voice of triumph at the close proclaim the death of that only begotten Son of God whom he had given to be the Saviour of the world. The scales drop off from the eyes they so long had covered. Fear goes out, and faith comes into Nicodemus' breast, a faith that plants him by Joseph's side in the garden, and unites their hands in the rendering of the last services to the body, which they buried in the new sepulchre.

What a flood of light fell then on the hitherto mysterious words of the Crucified; what a rich treasure of comfort would the meditation of them unfold all his life long afterwards to Nicodemus; and what an honor to him that he was chosen as the man to whom were first addressed those words which have comforted so many millions since, and are destined to comfort so many millions more in the years that are to come: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

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#### XIV.

#### THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.\*

COMING, as he did, to a community that had long been accustomed to act in its corporate capacity as a nation in covenant with God; coming to be nationally received or nationally rejected as the Messiah; a reception or rejection which could only be embodied in some decisive expression of the will of the nation, made through its authorized heads and representatives—our natural expectation is that Christ's public manifestation of himself would be made principally in Judea and at Jerusalem. And the actual opening of his public minis-

\* John 4.

try convinces us that had no check or hindrance been interposed, had any readiness been shown by the rulers of the people to look favorably on his character and claims, Judea and Jerusalem would have been the chief scene of his labors. For before he opened his lips, as a teacher sent from God, to any Galilean audience, or in any provincial synagogue, he presented himself in the capital, and by a bold and striking act, fitted to draw all eyes upon him, asserted his authority within the temple, as the house of his Father, which it became him to cleanse. The bold beginning was well sustained by both word and deed, but no favorable impression was made. The only one of the rulers who made any approach came to him by night, and went away to lock up deep within his breast the wonderful revelation that was made to him. Jesus retired from Jerusalem, but lingered still in Judea, spending the summer months which succeeded the Passover in some district of the country, not far from that in which John was baptizing.\* It seems strange to us that after the sign from heaven had been given that the greater than he had appeared, instead of joining himself to Jesus, as one of his disciples, John should have kept aloof, and continued baptizing, preserving thus a separate following of his own. And it seems equally strange, that now for a short time, and for this short time only, our Lord's disciples—the men who had voluntarily attached themselves to him, none of whom had as yet been separated from their earthly callings, or set apart as those through whom a new order of things was to be instituted—should also have engaged in baptizing, if not at the suggestion, yet by the permission and under the sanction of their Master. Whatever reasons we may assign for the separate baptisms of John and Jesus being for this short season contemporaneously sustained, they serve to bring out fully and in striking contrast the character and disposition towards Jesus of the Pharisees on the one hand and of the Baptist on the other. At first, in Judea as in Galilee, the common people heard Christ gladly, and came in great numbers to be baptized. This for the Pharisees is a new matter of offence, out of which, however, they construct an implement of mischief, which they hasten to employ. There can be little doubt that the question which arose between John's disciples and the Jews was stirred by the latter, had respect to the relative value of the two baptisms, and was intended to sow the seeds of dissension between the two disci-

\* As yet all attempts have failed to identify the Ænon near Salim, to which from the banks of the Jordan John had now removed. It will, in all probability, be discovered somewhere northeast of Jerusalem, so situated that the way from it into Galilee lay naturally through Samaria.

pleships. Fresh from the dispute, and heated by it, some of John's disciples came to him, and said unto him, evidently with the tone of men complaining of a grievance by which their feelings had been hurt: "Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him."

We may be all ready enough to acknowledge the superiority of another to ourselves in regard to qualities or acts in which we never sought for prominence or praise. Even as to those qualities and acts in which we may have ourselves excelled, we may not be unwilling to confess the superiority of another, provided that we do not come into direct comparison with him, in presence of those who embody the expression of their preference in some marked piece of conduct. But it does subject our weak nature to an extreme trial when, by one's side, in the very region in which he has attained extraordinary and unlooked-for success, he sees another rise whose success so far outstrips his own as to throw it wholly into the shade. Remember, now, that the Baptist was but a man, with all the common infirmities of our nature clinging to him; that up to the time he had baptized Jesus, his course had been one of unparalleled popularity; that from that time the tide of the popular favor began to ebb away from him, and to rise around this other, till at last he hears the tidings, He baptizeth, and all men now go to him. And then, listen to his answer to the complaint of his disciples: "A man," he said, "can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." 'This growing baptism of Jesus, this lesser baptism of mine, are both as Heaven has willed. The multitudes that once flocked to me were sent by God; the power which I had over them I got from God; and if the Lord who sent and gave is pleased now to withdraw them from me, to bestow them upon another, still will I adore his name. Nor is it bare submission to his will I cherish. I hear of, and I rejoice at the success of Christ. "Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly, because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.'" Rare and beautiful instance of an unenvying humility; all the rarer and more beautiful as occurring not in one of weak and gentle nature, but in a character of masculine energy, in which are often to be found only the stronger passions of humanity. A rare and beautiful sight it is to see the gentle Jonathan not only give way to David, as successor to his father's kingdom, but content to stand by David's side and live under the shadow of his throne;

but a rarer, I believe, and still more beautiful thing it is to see the strong-willed Baptist not only make room for Jesus, but rejoice that his own light, which had "shone out so brilliantly, enlightening for a season the whole Jewish heavens, faded away and sunk out of sight in the beams of the rising Sun of righteousness." And John's final testimony upon this occasion to the character and office of Jesus is as striking as the involuntary display that he makes of his own character, going much beyond what he had said before, and containing much that bears a singular likeness to what Jesus had shortly before said of himself to Nicodemus: "He that cometh from above is above all; he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth; he that cometh from heaven is above all: and what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." John 3:31-36.

Such was the testimony elicited from John on being told of the large concourse of people which had gathered round Jesus and his disciples. Very different was the effect which this intelligence produced in Jerusalem. It fanned the hostile feeling already kindled in the breasts of the Pharisees. How that feeling might have manifested itself had Jesus continued in Judea, his disciples gone on baptizing, and the people kept flocking to them, we cannot tell. As from one quarter there burst about this time on the head of John the storm that closed his public career, so from another quarter might a storm have burst on the head of Jesus with like effect.

Foreseeing the peril to which he might be exposed, Jesus, "when he knew how the Pharisees had heard that he made and baptized more disciples than John, left Judea, and departed again into Galilee," his nearest and most direct route lay through the central district of Samaria. This district was inhabited by people of a foreign origin, and with a somewhat curious history. When the king of Assyria carried the Ten Tribes into captivity, it is said that, in order to fill the void which their exile created, he brought "men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel; and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof." 2 Kings 17:24. These certainly were idolaters, worshippers of a strange med-



ley of divinities, and brought with them their old faiths to their new home. Shortly after their settlement, a frightful plague visited them, and it occurred to themselves, or was suggested by the neighboring Israelites, that it had fallen upon them because of their not worshipping the old divinity of the place. In their alarm they sent an embassy to their monarch, who, either humoring or sharing their fears, sent one of the captive Jewish priests to instruct them in the Israeli-tish faith. This faith they at once accepted and professed, combining it with their old idolatries: "They feared the Lord," we are told, "and served their graven images." 2 Kings 17:41. Gradually, however, they were weaned from their ancient superstitions. When, under the decree of Cyrus, the captives of Judah and Benjamin, returning from Babylon, set about rebuilding the temple at Jerusalem, the Samaritans proposed to join them in the work. The proposal was haughtily rejected, and that rejection was the first of a long series of disputes. A fresh ground of offence arose when Manasseh, a grandson of one, and brother of another high priest, had, contrary to the laws and customs of the Jews, married a daughter of Sanballat, the governor of the province of Samaria. Called upon to renounce this alliance and repudiate his wife, Manasseh, rather than do so, fled from Jerusalem, and put himself under the protection of his father-in-law. A considerable number of the Jews who were dissatisfied with the great strictness with which Nehemiah was administering affairs at Jerusalem, followed him. The Samaritans, thus strengthened in numbers, and having now a member of one of the highest families of the priesthood among them, erected a rival temple on Mount Gerizim, and set up there a ritual of worship in strict accordance with the Mosaic institute. Their history from this time to the time of Christ is a very chequered one. Their territory was invaded by John Hyrcanus, one of the family of the Maccabees, who plundered their capital, and razing the stately temple on Mount Gerizim from its foundations, left it a heap of ruins, so that when Jesus passed that way, an altar reared upon these ruins was all that Gerizim could boast.

Notwithstanding all these vicissitudes, and all the harsh hostilities to which they were exposed, the Samaritans became purer and purer in their faith, till all relics of their Medo-Persian idolatries had disappeared. They received, as of divine authority, the five Books of Moses, the Pentateuch, but they rejected all the books of history and prophecies which followed, and which were full, as the Jews believed, of intimations of the future subjection of the whole world to Israeli-tish sway, and the establishment of Jerusalem as the central place of worship and the seat of universal empire.



CHRIST AND THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

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TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.

But though the Jews despised the Samaritans as a people of a mixed origin and a mutilated faith, and the Samaritans repaid the contempt, we are not to think that the two communities lived so much apart that there was no traffic or intercourse between them. There was little or no interchange of kindly or social feeling; but it was quite within the limits of the common usage for the disciples to go into a Samaritan town, to buy bread for themselves and their Master by the way.

Their morning's walk had carried Jesus and his disciples across or along the plain of Mukhna to the entrance of that narrow valley which lies between Mounts Ebal and Gerizim. Here, upon a spur of the latter height which runs out into the plain, was Jacob's Well; the town of Sychar, the ancient Shechem, the modern Nablous, lying about a mile and a half west, up in the valley, at the base of Gerizim. It was the sixth hour—our twelve o'clock—and the Syrian sun glared hotly upon the travellers. Wearied with the heat of the day and the toil of the morning, Jesus sat down by the well-side, while his disciples went on to Sychar to make the necessary purchases. As Jesus is sitting by the well alone, a woman of Samaria approaches. He fixes his eye upon her as she comes near; watches her as she proceeds to draw the water, waiting till the full pitcher is upon the well-mouth, and then says to her, "Give me a drink." He is a Jew; she knows it by his dress and speech. Yet as one willing to be indebted to her, he asks a favor at her hands; a favor for which, if his look do not belie him, he will be grateful. Not as one unwilling to grant the favor, but surprised at its being asked, her answer is: "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria?" He will answer this question, but not in the way that she expects. The manner of his dispensation of the great gift he came from heaven to bestow stands embodied in the words: "Thou wouldest have asked, and I would have given thee living water."\*

\* There is no doubt that the well still shown to travellers near Nablous is the well of Jacob. Its position near to Sychar; its importance as inferred from its dimensions, being a well of nine feet in diameter and seventy-five in depth; cut out of the solid rock, with sides hewn and smooth as Jacob's servants may be supposed to have left them—go far, of themselves, to determine its identity; and the conclusion is confirmed by an undivided, unbroken tradition—Jewish, Samaritan, Arabian, Turkish, Christian.

Besides the absence of all doubt as to its identity, there is another circumstance which surrounds it with a peculiar sacredness. It is the one and only limited and well-defined locality in Palestine that you can connect with the presence of the Redeemer. You cannot in all Palestine draw another circle of limited diameter within whose circumference you can be absolutely certain that



The woman has taken him to be a common Jew, an ordinary wayfarer, whom thirst and the fatigue of travel had overcome, forcing him perhaps unwillingly to ask for water to drink. He will fix her attention upon himself; he will stir up her feminine curiosity by telling her that he who asks has something on his part to give; that if she only knew who he was, and what that living water was which he had at command, instead of stopping to inquire why he had asked water of her, she would be asking it of him, and what she asked he without question would have given. Living water!—better water than that which she has in her pitcher. Could it be by going deeper down, and getting nearer to the bubbling spring beneath, that he could get such water; or was it water of superior quality from some other well than this of Jacob? “Sir,” she says, addressing him with awakening interest and an increasing respect, “Sir,” she says, in her ignorance and confusion, “thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?” Her thoughts are wandering away back to the first drinkers at this well, when its waters first burst out in their freshness, imagining that it must be of them, or of the water of some other neighboring well, that this stranger had been speaking. Again, waiving as before all direct reply to her

Jesus once stood, except round Jacob's Well. I had the greatest possible desire to tread that circle round and round, to sit here and there and everywhere around that well-mouth; that I might gratify a long-cherished wish. But never was disappointment greater than the one which I experienced when I reached the spot. Close by it, in early Christian times, they built a church, whose ruins now cover the ground in its immediate neighborhood. Over the well itself they erected a vaulted arch, through a small opening in which, travellers, a hundred years, crept down into a chamber ten feet square, which left but a narrow margin on which to stand and look down into the well. This vaulted covering has now fallen in, choking up so completely the mouth of the well, that it is only here and there, through apertures between the blocks of stone, that you can find an entrance into the well. I speak of it as I found it last year. It must have been more accessible to travellers even a few years ago; but year by year the rubbish that is constantly being thrown into it accumulates, and the opening at the top is becoming more closed. The Mussulmans of the neighborhood, seeing the respect in which it is held by Christians, appear to take a pleasure in obstructing and defiling it. You cannot sit, then, by Jacob's Well, or walk around it, or look down into its waters. It is stated upon good authority, that recently the well, and the site around it, have been purchased by the Russian church. Let us hope that they will clear away all the stones and rubbish, and leave it clear and open, as Jesus found it, when, weary and way-worn, he sat down beside it.

question, Jesus with increased solemnity says: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." It is not this water, then; it is no common water; it is water that this man alone can give; water which is not to be taken in draughts, with which you may quench your thirst now, and then wait till the thirst comes back again ere another draught be taken; but water of which a man should constantly be drinking, and if he did so would be constantly satisfied, so that there would be no recurring intervals of desire and gratification—this water as received turning into a well within the man himself, springing up into everlasting life. Beginning to understand a little, seeing this at least, that it was of some element altogether different from any water that she had ever tasted, yet clinging still to the notion that it must be some kind of material water that he means, she says: "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw."

One part of Christ's object has now been gained; he has awakened not an idle, but a very eager curiosity; he has fixed the woman's attention on himself as having some great benefit in his hand which he is not unwilling to bestow. Through a figurative description of what this benefit is, he will not or cannot carry her farther at present. Abruptly breaking the conversation off at this point, he says to her: "*Go, call thy husband, and come hither.*" With great frankness she says, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "Thou hast well said, I have no husband, for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband; in that saidst thou truly." In the past domestic history of this woman there had been much that was peculiar, though up to the last connection she had formed there may not have been any thing that was sinful. Christ's object, however, was not so much to convict her of bygone or existing guilt, as to convince her that he was in full possession of all the secrets of her past life, and so to create within her a belief in his more than human insight. Not so much as one overwhelmed with the sense of shame, but rather as one surprised into a new belief as to the character and capabilities of the stranger who addresses her, she replies, "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." If she had been a woman of an utterly abandoned character, whose whole bygone life had been one series of flagrant offences, whose conscience, long seared with iniquity, Christ was now trying to quicken—very curious would it appear that so soon as the quickening came, waiving all questions about her own character, she should so instantly have put

the question about the true place of religious worship, whether here at Gerizim, or there at Jerusalem.

There may have been an attempt to parry conviction, and to turn aside the hand of the convincer, by raising questions about places and forms of worship; but I cannot think, had this been the spirit and motive of this woman's inquiries, that Jesus would have dealt with them as he did; for, treating them evidently as the earnest inquiries of one wishing to be instructed, assuming all the dignity of that office which had been attributed to him, he says to her, 'Woman, believe me, the hour cometh (I speak as one before whose eye the whole history of the future stands revealed; the hour cometh—I came myself into the world to bring it on) when that strong bias to worship that lies so deep in the hearts of men, shall have found at last its one only true and worthy object in that God and Father of all, who made all, and who loves all, and has sent me to reveal him to all; when, stripped of all the restraints that have hitherto confined it to a single people, a single country, a single town; relieved of all the supports that were required by it in its weak and tottering childhood—the spirit of a true piety shall go forth in freedom over the globe, seeking for those—whatever be the places they choose, the outward forms that they adopt—for those who will adore and love and serve him in spirit and in truth, and wherever it finds them, owning them as the true worshippers of the Father. Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain nor yet in Jerusalem, nor here, nor there, nor anywhere exclusively, shall men worship the Father. "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth."' The newness, the breadth, the sublimity, if not also the truth of his teaching, at once suggested to the mind of the listener the thought of that Messiah for whom every Samaritan and Jew alike were looking. "I know," she said, "that Messiah cometh. When he is come he will tell us all things." Jesus saith to her, "I that speak unto thee am he."

Why was it that that which he so long and studiously concealed from the Jewish people, that which he so strictly enjoined his disciples not to make known to them, was thus so simply, clearly, and directly told? In the woman herself to whom the wonderful revelation was made, there may have been much to draw it forth. The gentle surprise with which she meets the request of the Jewish stranger; the expression of respect she uses so soon as he begins to speak of God, and some gift of his she might enjoy; her guileless confession when once she found she was actually in a prophet's presence; her instant readiness to believe that Jew though he was—



apparently of no note or mark among his brethren—he was yet a prophet; her eager question about the most acceptable way of worshipping the Most High; the quick occurrence of the coming Messiah to her thoughts; the full, confiding, generous faith that she at once reposed in him when he said, “I that speak unto thee am he;” her forgetfulness of her individual errand to the well; her leaving her pitcher there behind her; her running into the city to call all the men of Sychar, saying, “Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?” all conspire to convince us that, sinful though she was, she was hungering and thirsting after righteousness, waiting for the consolation of Israel, we trust prepared to hail the Saviour when he stood revealed.

But besides her individual character, there was also the circumstance that she was a Samaritan. It is the first time that Jesus comes into close, private, personal contact with one who is not of the seed of Israel; for though she claimed Jacob as her father, neither this woman nor any of the tribe she belonged to were of Jewish descent. “I am not come,” said Jesus, afterwards defining the general boundaries of his personal ministry, “but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” When he sent out the seventy, his instructions to them were: “Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not.” And yet there were a few occasions, and this is the first of them, in which Christ broke through the restraints under which it pleased him ordinarily to act. I believe that there are just four instances of this kind recorded in the Saviour’s life: that of the woman of Samaria, of the Roman centurion, of the Canaanitish woman, of the Greeks who came up to Jerusalem. All these were instances of our Lord’s dealings with those who stood without the pale of Judaism, and as we come upon them in the narrative, we shall be struck with the singular interest which Jesus took in each; the singular care that he bestowed in testing and bringing out to view the simplicity and strength of the desire towards him, and faith in him, that were displayed; the fulness of the revelations of himself that he made, and of that satisfaction and delight with which he contemplated the issue. It was the great and good Shepherd, stretching out his hand across the fence, and gathering in a lamb or two from the outfields, in token of the truth that there were other sheep which were out of the Jewish fold, whom also he was in due time to bring in, so that there should be one fold and one shepherd.

Our idea, that it was this circumstance—her Samaritan nationality—which lent such interest, in our Saviour’s own regard, to his



interview with this woman by the well-side, is confirmed by casting a glance at its result. Jesus at their entreaty turned aside, and abode two days with the Sycharites. You read of no sign or wonder wrought, no miracle performed, save that miracle of knowledge which won the woman's faith. Though no part of it is recorded, his teaching for those few days in Sychar was, in its general character, like to his teaching by the well-mouth, and on the ground alone of the truthfulness, the simplicity, the purity, the spirituality, and the sublimity of that teaching, many believed on him, declaring they knew that this was indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

The phrase is so familiar to the Christian ear, that we may fail to mark its singularity as coming from the lips of these rude Samaritans. No Saviour this for Jew alone, or Samaritan alone; for any one age or country. Not his the work to deliver from mere outward thralldom, to establish either in Jerusalem or elsewhere any temporal kingdom: his the wider and more glorious office to emancipate the human spirit, and be its guide to the Father of the spirits of all flesh. Compare the notions which these simple villagers had of the Messiah, with those prevalent among the Jews; compare with them any of the most intelligent of our Lord's apostles up to the day of Pentecost, and your very wonder might create doubt, did you not remember that it was not from the books of Daniel and Zachariah and Ezekiel, the books from which the Jews by false interpretations derived their ideas of the Messiah's character and reign, that the Samaritans derived theirs, but from the Pentateuch alone, the five books of Moses: and when you turn to the latter, and look at the prophecies regarding Christ which they contain, you will find that the two things about him to which they point—that he should be a prophet sent from God, and that his office should have respect to all mankind, that to him should the gathering of the people be, and that in him should all families of the earth be blessed—were the very two things that the faith of these Samaritans embraced when they said, "We know that this is indeed the Christ, *the Saviour of the world.*"

The conversation by the well, the two fruitful days at Sychar, what is the general lesson that they convey? That wherever Christ finds an open listening ear, he has glad tidings that he is ready to pour into it; that wherever he finds a thirsting soul, he has living waters with which he delights to quench its thirst; that to all who are truly seeking him, he drops disguise and says: "Behold, even I that speak unto you, am he;" that wherever he finds minds and hearts longing after a revelation of the Father, and the true mode of worshipping him, to such is the revelation given. Had you but stood

by Jacob's well, and seen the look of Jesus, and listened to the tones of his voice; or had you been in Sychar during those two bright and happy days, hearing the instructions so freely given, so gratefully received, you would have had the evidence of sense to tell you with what abounding joy to all who are waiting and who are willing, Jesus breaks the bread and pours out the water of everlasting life. Multiplied a thousandfold is the evidence to the same effect now offered to the eye and ear of faith. Still from the lips of the Saviour of the world, over all the world the words are sounding forth: "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink." Still the manner of his dispensation of the great gift stands embodied in the words: "Thou wouldest have asked, and I would have given thee living water." And still these other voices are heard catching up and re-echoing our Lord's own gracious invitation: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

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## XV.

### THE JEWISH NOBLEMAN AND THE ROMAN CENTURION.\*

SEATED by the side of Jacob's well, and seeing the Samaritan woman draw water out of it, Jesus seizes on the occasion to discourse to her of the water of life. So soon as she hears from his own lips that he is the Messiah, this woman leaves her water-pot behind her, and hurries into the neighboring city to announce to others the great discovery which has been made to her. She has scarcely left the Saviour's side, ere his disciples present themselves with the bread which they had bought in Sychar, offering it, and saying to him, "Master, eat." But as if hunger had gone from him, and he cared not now for food, he answers, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." Wondering at his manner, his appearance, his speech, so different from what they had expected, the disciples say to one another—it is the only explanation that occurs to them—"Hath any man brought him aught to eat?" Correcting the false conception, our Lord replies: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish his work." He had been eating that meat, he had been doing that will, while they were away; and so grateful had it been to him to be so engaged, so happy had he been in instructing a solitary woman, and

\* John 4: 46-54; Luke 7: 1-10.

sending her away, in full belief in his Messiahship, to go and bring others to him, that in the joy of a spirit whose first desire had been granted to it, the bodily appetite ceases to solicit, and the hunger of an hour ago is no longer felt. She is gone, but already foreseeing all, he anticipates her return—hears and acts upon the invitation given, has the fruit of these two productive days at Sychar before his eyes, looking upon the few sheaves then gathered in as the first-fruits of a still wider, richer harvest. The idea of that harvest filling his mind, he looks over the fields around him, and blending the natural and the spiritual together, he says to his disciples: “Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.” How many contrasts as well as analogies between the husbandry of nature and the husbandry of grace do these words set forth! The sower in the fields of nature has always four months to wait; such is the interval in Palestine between seed-time and harvest. In those other fields in which Jesus is the chief sower, as in the very corner of them at Sychar, sometimes the seed has scarcely sunk into the soil ere it springs up ready for the reaper’s hands. Then not seldom the ploughman overtakes the reaper, and the reapers and the sowers go on together. And yet there is often, too, an interval; nor is it always even generally true that it is he who sows who reaps. Nowhere is the common proverb, that one soweth and another reapeth, oftener verified than here. In the spiritual domain it is the lot of some to do little else all their lives than sow, to sow long and laboriously without seeing any fields whitening unto the harvest; it is the lot of others to have little else to do than gather in the fruits of others’ labors; or, looking at the broad history of the world and of the church, can we not mark certain epochs which we would particularly characterize as times of sowing, others as times of reaping, sometimes separated by wide intervals, sometimes running rapidly into one another? But whether they be the same or different agents that are employed in the sowing and in the reaping; whether longer space intervene or the sowing and the reaping go together, one thing is true, that when the harvest cometh, and the everlasting life, towards which all the labor has been tending, is reached, then shall there be a great and a mutual rejoicing—the gladness of those to whom it is given to see that their labor has not been in vain in the Lord.

It has always been a question whether there was any allusion made or intended by Christ to the actual condition of the fields around him as he spake. I cannot but think, though it may be in opposition to the judgment of some of our first scholars, that there was. Jesus was speaking at the time when there were as yet four months unto the harvest. If it were so, then we have good ground for settling at what period of the year this visit of our Lord to Sychar took place. The harvest in Palestine begins about the middle of April. Four months back from that time carries us to the middle of December, the Jewish seedtime. If so, the interval between the first Passover at which our Lord had his conversation with Nicodemus, which took place, as we know, at the commencement of the early harvest, and the conversation with the woman of Samaria, an interval of no less than eight months, was spent by Jesus in Judea, giving to the rulers of the people a privileged opportunity of considering Christ's character and claims. Nothing but disappointment, neglect, indifference, or alienation having been manifested, Jesus retired to Galilee, taking Samaria by the way. The two days at Sychar presented a striking contrast to his reception in Judea. How will they stand in comparison with the reception that awaits him in Galilee?

Cana lies farther north than Nazareth. The road to the one would lead close to, if not through the other. On this occasion Jesus appears to have passed by Nazareth. Perhaps it was to avoid such a reception as he knew to be awaiting him there, or it may have been simply because Mary and the family had shifted their residence, and were now living near their relatives at Cana. The rumor of the first miracle which he had wrought there some months before may have spread widely in the neighborhood. It was done, however, so quietly, and in such a hidden manner, that one can well conceive of different versions of it going abroad. It was different with those reports which the Galileans who had been up at the last Passover brought back from Jerusalem. Our Lord's miracles there, whatever they were, were done openly; many had believed because of them. The Galileans who were at the feast had seen them all, and on their return home had filled the country with the noise of them, all the more gratified, perhaps, that he who had drawn all eyes upon him at Jerusalem was one of themselves. And now it is told abroad that he has come back from Judea and is at Cana.

The tidings reach the ear of a nobleman in Capernaum, a Jew of high birth connected with the court of Herod Antipas, at the very time that a grievous malady is on his son, and has brought him to the very brink of death. He had not heard, perhaps, that Jesus had restored



the dying to health; so far as we know, the healing of his son may have been the first miracle of that kind which Jesus wrought; but he has heard of his turning the water into wine, he has heard of the wonders wrought at Jerusalem. He by whom such miracles had been done should be able to rebuke disease. It is at least worth trying whether he will or can. The distance to Cana is but a short one, some twenty miles or so. He will send no servant, he will go himself, and make the trial. He went, saw Jesus, told him his errand, and besought him that he would come down and heal his son. Why was it that before Jesus made any reply, or gave any indication of his purpose, he said, as the fruit of some deep inward thought which the application had suggested, "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe"? It was because he saw all that was in that man, all the motives by which he had been prompted to this visit; the strong affection for his son, which Jesus will not rebuke; his willingness to be at any pains on his behalf, to seek help from any quarter; his partial faith in Christ's power to help—for without some faith of this description, he would not have come at all; yet the absence of all deeper faith springing from a sense of spiritual disease, which should have brought the man to Jesus for himself as well as for his son, and which should have taught him to look to Jesus as the healer of the soul. It was because he saw in this nobleman a specimen of his countrymen at large, and in his application a type and prelude of the multitude of like applications afterwards to be made to him.

It may have served to suggest this the more readily to Christ's thoughts, and give the greater intensity to the emotion excited within his breast, that he had just come from Sychar, where so many had believed in him without any sign or wonder done, believed in him as a teacher sent from God, believed in him as the Messiah promised to their fathers. What a contrast between those simple-minded, simple-hearted Samaritans, whose love and wonder, faith and penitence, joy and gratitude had been so quickly, so purely, so exclusively awakened, and this nobleman of Capernaum and his Galilean fellow-countrymen! We know that Jesus never returned to Sychar, though he must more than once have passed near to it on his way to and from Jerusalem. We know that he gave positive instructions to the Seventy to go into no city of the Samaritans. It was in fulfilment of his design that his personal ministry should be confined to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, that he laid this restraint upon himself and his disciples. But can we think that it cost him no self-denial, that it was with no inward pang that Jesus turned away from those who showed themselves so willing to receive, to those who were for

ever asking a sign from heaven, and who, "after he had done so many miracles, yet believed not in him"? John 12:37. Why was it, then, that when the Pharisees came forth and began to question him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, "he sighed deeply in his spirit, and said, Why doth this generation seek after a sign?" Mark 8:12. The deep sigh came from the depth of a spirit moved and grieved at this incessant craving for outward seals and vouchers, this unwillingness to believe in him simply on the ground of his character and his doctrine. Though he did not meet the peculiar demand of the Pharisees, who, unsatisfied even with his other works, sought from him a special sign from heaven, our Lord, we know, was lavish in the performance of miracles, supplied willingly and largely that ground of faith which they afforded, appealed often and openly to the proof of his divine mission which they supplied. Yet all this is consistent with his deploring the necessity which required such a kind of evidence to be supplied, and his mourning over that state of the human spirit out of which the necessity arose. "The works that I do bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works." John 5:36; 10:37, 38. Such was Christ's language, openly addressed to the rulers of the people at Jerusalem. Nor was it differently that he spoke to his disciples in private: "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake." John 14:11. Jesus would rather have been believed in without the works, would rather that he had not had the works to do in order to win the faith. It is not, then, a faith in the reality of miracles, nor in him simply as the worker of them, nor in any thing he was or said or did that rests exclusively upon his having performed them, which constitutes that deeper faith in himself to which it is his supreme desire to conduct us. And when we read of Jesus sighing when signs were asked, and sighing as miracles were wrought by him, we cannot interpret his sighing otherwise than as the expression of the profound grief of his spirit over those who are so little alive to the more spiritual evidence that his character and works carried along with them, as to need to have these outward props and buttresses supplied. There are two different kinds of faith—that which you put in what another is, or in what another has said, because of your own personal knowledge of him and your perception of the intrinsic truthfulness of his sayings, and that which you cherish because of certain external vouchers for his truthfulness that he presents. Jesus invites us to put both these kinds of faith in him, but the latter and the lower in order to lead on

to the former and the higher, the real abiding, life-giving faith in him as the Saviour of our souls.

“Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.” We are scarcely surprised that the nobleman of Capernaum, when his eager entreaty was met in this way, by the utterance of so broad an aphorism, should have felt somewhat disappointed and chagrined. There was some hope for him indeed, had he reflected on it, in the words that Christ had used; for if Jesus had not meant to do this sign and wonder, he would not have spoken as he did. But the father is in no mood to take up and weigh the worth and meaning of Christ’s words. What he wants is that Christ should go down with him immediately to Capernaum; he has some hope, that if there, he may be able to cure his son. He has no idea of a healing wrought at a distance, effected at Cana by a word of the Lord’s power, an act of the Lord’s will. “Sir,” he says, “come down ere my child die:” a tinge of impatience, perhaps of pride, yet full of the good compensatory element, strong paternal love. “Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth.” It is the first time, it is one of the few instances in which Jesus stood face to face with earthly rank and power. Perhaps this nobleman presumed on his position, when he said, with something of an imperative tone, “Sir, come down ere my child die.” If so, he must have been not a little astonished to find the tone of command rolled back upon him thus: “Go thy way; thy son liveth.” How high above the nobility of earth rises the royalty of heaven! This is the style and manner of Him who saith, and it is done; who commandeth, and creation throughout all its borders obeys. None ever did such works on earth as Jesus did; none ever did them in such a simple, easy, unaffected manner; the manner becoming one who was exerting not a delegated but a native power.

The manner and the substance of the declaration told alike at once upon the nobleman. It satisfied him that the end of his visit was gained. He believed in the word of Jesus, that the death he dreaded was not to come upon his son, that the child he loved so tenderly was to be spared to him. Exactly how this had been brought about he did not as yet know. Whether the cure had been instantaneous and complete, or whether the crisis of it had passed and the recovery had begun; whether it had been by his possession of a superhuman knowledge or by his exercise of a superhuman power that Jesus had been able to announce to him the fact, “Thy son liveth,” he neither stayed, nor did he venture to ask any explanation. It was enough for him to be assured of the fact, and there was something in the manner in which that “*Go thy way*” had been spoken which

forbade delay. He meets his servants by the way, bearers of glad tidings. With them he can use all freedom. He asks all about the cure, and learns that it had not been slowly, but instantaneously, that the fever had gone, and that the time at which it had done so was the very time at which these words of Jesus, "Thy child liveth," had been spoken at Cana. He had gone out to that village but half a believer in Christ's power in any way to help, limiting that power so much in his conception that it had never once occurred to him that Jesus could do any thing for him unless he saw the child. But now he feels that he has been standing in the presence of One the extent of whose power he had as much underrated as the depth and tenderness of his love. Awe, conviction, gratitude fill his soul. A double sign and wonder has been done in Israel. A child has been cured of a fever at Capernaum by one standing miles away at Cana, and a father has been cured of his unbelief—the same kind of power that banished the disease from the body of the one banishing distrust from the heart of the other.

How far above all that he had ever asked! His child was dying when the father left Capernaum, was still nearer death when he arrived at Cana. Had Jesus done what the father wanted, and gone down with him to Capernaum, his son might have been dead ere they got there. The word of power is spoken, and just as the disease is clasping its victim in a last embrace, it has to relax its grasp, take wings, and fly away. The father has gone unselfishly, affectionately on an errand of love, seeking simply his child's life, not asking or caring to get any thing himself from Christ. But now in this Jesus he recognizes a higher and greater than a mere healer of the body. Spiritual life is breathed into his own soul. Nor is this all; he returns to Capernaum to tell all the wonders of the cure; tells them to the healed child, who also believes—and strange would be the meeting afterwards between that child and Jesus—he tells them to the other members of his family, and each in turn believes. He himself believed, and with him all his house—the first whole household brought into the Christian fold.

Let us compare for a moment this case with that of the centurion. Both plead for others; the one for his child, the other for his servant, and the pleading of both is signally successful; the compliance prompt and generous. Such honor doth Jesus put on all kindly intercession with him on behalf of those to whom we are bound by ties of relationship and affection. In both the cases, too, Christ adopts the unusual method of curing at a distance, curing by a word. But the treatment of the two applicants is different—suited to the state, the char-



acter, the necessities of each. The one's faith is limited and weak, and needs to be expanded and strengthened; the other's is strong, and waits only to be exhibited in combination with that humility which covers it as with a crown of glory. The one man, little knowing what Christ can do for him, and impatient at what looks like a repulse, says in his haste, "Sir, come down ere my child die." The other, having a boundless faith in Jesus, ventures not at first to prescribe any special mode of cure, but contents himself with sending some elders of the Jews to ask that Christ's healing power should be exercised on behalf of his servant. Jesus goes not with him who asks him to do so, having a far greater thing to do for him than to comply with his request. But he no sooner gets the message delivered by deputy from the other, than he says, "I will come and heal him," and sets off instantly on the errand. But he knew that he should be arrested by the way. He knew that the Roman centurion had such a sense of his own unworthiness that he shrank from receiving him into his house; he knew that he had such confidence in his power that all he wanted was that Jesus should will it, and his servant should be cured. He knew that there was a humility and a faith in the breast of this Gentile officer—the first Gentile that ever applied to him—such as was not to be found in any Israelitish bosom. It was to bring these before the eyes of his fellow-countrymen, and to hold them up for admiration and rebuke, that he did not at the first act as he had done at Cana, but made that movement towards the centurion's dwelling. Wonderful, indeed, the faith embodied in the message which the centurion sent: 'I, a Roman officer, have a limited authority, but within its limits this authority is supreme. I can say unto one of my soldiers, Go, and he goeth; to another, Come, and he cometh; to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. But thou, Jesus, art supreme over all. As my soldiers are under me, so under thee are all the powers and processes of nature. Thou canst say to this disease, Come, and it cometh; to that other disease, Go, and it goeth; to thy servants Life and Death, Do this, and they do it. Say thou then but the word, and my servant shall be healed.' And Jesus marvelled when he heard the message, and he turned about and said to the people that followed him—it was very much for their sakes that he had arranged it so, that so many peculiarities should attend this miracle, and such a preëminence be given to this first exhibition of Gentile faith in him—"I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel." It was the highest exercise of human faith in him that Jesus had yet met with, and he wondered and rejoiced that it should be found beyond the bounds of Israel. Midway be-

tween the Gentile and the Jew stood the woman of Samaria; outside the bounds of Judaism stood this Roman centurion. Was it to prefigure the great future of the gathering in of all people and nations and tongues and tribes that so early in his ministry such a manifestation of faith in the Saviour was made?

But while wondering with Christ at the beautiful exhibition of humility and faith in a quarter so unlooked-for, let us take home the warning with which Jesus followed up the expression of his approval and admiration: "And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness, there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Surely from the lips of the living and compassionate Redeemer words of such terrible import never would have passed, had the warning they convey not been needed. Let it then be the first and most earnest effort of each of us to enter into this kingdom, of which nominally and by profession we are the children, in all humility, and with entire trust in Christ our Saviour, lest the opportunity for entering in go past, and the door be shut—shut by him who shutteth, and no man openeth.

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## XVI.

### — THE POOL OF BETHESDA.\*

COULD we ascertain what the feast was to which Jesus went up, and at which he healed the man beside the pool of Bethesda, it would go far to settle the question as to the length of our Lord's public ministry; but after all the labor that has been bestowed on the investigation, it remains still uncertain whether it was the Passover, or one of the other annual festivals. If it was the Passover—as, upon the whole, we incline to think it was, as John mentions three other Passovers, one occurring before, and two after this one—Christ's ministry would come to be regarded as covering a space of about three years and a half; if it were one or other of the lesser festivals, a year or more, according to the festival which is fixed upon, must be deducted from that period. This much, at least, appears certain, that it was our Lord's second appearance in Jerusalem after his baptism, and that it occurred at or near the close of a year, the most of which had been spent in Judea. On the occasion of this

\* John 5.

second visit, Jesus went one Sabbath-day to walk through the cloisters or colonnades that were built round a large swimming bath, called the pool of Bethesda. Tradition has for many ages pointed to a large excavation, 360 feet long, 130 feet broad, and 75 feet deep, lying outside the north wall of the Harem enclosure, and near to St. Stephen's gate, as having been this pool. The peculiar character of its masonry establishes the fact that it must have been intended originally as a reservoir for water. At one of its corners there are two arched openings or vaults, one twelve, the other nineteen feet wide, extending backward to an unknown distance, forming part, it may have been, of the porches of which the evangelist speaks. These porches, on the day on which Jesus visited them, were crowded. They formed one of the city resorts; and, besides numbers of others that frequented them for the ordinary use of the waters, there lay around a great multitude of the blind, the halt, and the withered, waiting for the moving of the water.

If we accept the account given in the fourth verse of the fifth chapter, the moving of the water, and the healing virtue temporarily bestowed upon it during the period of its commotion, were due to angelic agency. The verse, however, is wanting in many of the most ancient manuscripts, and has come now to be very generally regarded as an interpolation very naturally inserted by the early transcribers of the gospel, as embodying the expression of what was then the popular belief. We are disposed the rather to concur in this view, when we consider how unlike to angelic influence is the kind of agency here attributed to it as elsewhere described in Holy Writ, and how singular it would have been had the healing power been so bestowed that it should be restricted to the single person who first stepped in. Of itself this would not be sufficient ground on which to reject the idea of a supernatural agency having been employed, but if the verse alluded to did not form part of the original writing of the evangelist, then we are left at liberty to believe that this was a pool supplied by an intermittent spring, which at certain seasons, owing to the sudden formation of particular gases, bubbled up, throwing the whole water of the reservoir into commotion, impregnated for the time with qualities which had a healing power over some forms of disease—a power of course greatly magnified in the popular idea. But whether the verse, and the explanation which it contains of the moving of the water, be accepted or rejected, the narrative of what Jesus said and did remains untouched.

Wandering through these crowded porches, and looking at the strange array of the diseased waiting there for the auspicious moment,

the eye of Jesus rests on one who wears a dejected and despairing look, as if he had given up all hope. Thirty-eight years before, the powers of life and motion had been so enfeebled that it was with the greatest difficulty, and at the slowest pace, he could creep along the ground. His friends had got tired perhaps of helping him otherwise, and as their last resource, had carried him to the porches of the pool, and left him there to do the best for himself he could. And he had done that best often and often, yet had failed. Every time the troubling of the water came, he had made the effort; but every time he had seen some one of more vigor and alertness, or better helped, get in before him, and snatch the benefit out of his hands. Jesus knew all this: knew how long it had been since the paralytic stroke first fell on him; how long it was since he had been brought to try the efficacy of these waters; how the expectation of cure, at first full and bright, had been gradually fading from his heart. To rekindle the dying hope, to fix the man's attention on himself, Jesus bends over the bed on which he lies, looks down at him, and says, "Wilt thou be made whole?" Were the words spoken in mockery? That could not be; a glance at the speaker was sufficient to disprove it. But the question surely would not have been asked had the speaker known how helpless was he to whom it was addressed. He said, "I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool, but while I am coming another steppeth down before me." As he gives this explanation, he looks up more earnestly into the stranger's face—a face he had never seen before—and gathers a new life and hope from the expression of sympathy, the look of power that countenance conveys.

"Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." The command was instantly obeyed. The cure was instantly complete. The short time, however, that it had taken for him to stoop and lift the mattress on which he lay, had been sufficient for Jesus to pass on, and be lost among the crowd. The stopping, the question, the command, the cure, all had been so sudden, the man has been so taken by surprise, that he doubts whether he would be able to recognise that stranger if he saw him again. Lifting his bed, and rejoicing in the new sensation of recovered strength, he walks through the city streets in search of his old home and friends. The Jews—an expression by which, in his gospel, John always means not the general community, but some of the ecclesiastical heads and rulers of the people—the Jews see him as he walks, and say to him: "It is the Sabbath-day; it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed." No answer could be more natural, as no excuse could be more valid, than that



which the man gave when he said: "He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed and walk." His challengers do not ask him any thing about the healing—as soon as they hear of it, they suspect who the healer was—but fixing upon the act in which the breach of the Sabbath lay, and as if admitting the validity of the man's defence, in throwing the responsibility of that act upon him who had ordered him to do it, "They asked him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed and walk?" He could not tell, and so the conversation by the wayside dropped.

Soon after, the healed man is in the temple, thanking God, let us believe, for the great mercy bestowed upon him. Jesus, too, is there; but they might have passed without the healed recognising the healer. It was not the purpose, however, of our Lord that it should be so. Finding the man among the worshippers, he says to him, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." Nothing more seems to have been said; nothing more to have passed between the two; but that short sentence, what a light it threw upon the distant past! reminding the man that it had been to the sins of his youth that he had owed the eight-and-thirty years of infirmity that had followed; and what a solemn warning did they carry as to the future—reminding him that if, on being restored to strength, he should return to sin, a still worse thing than so many years of bodily infirmity might be in store for him. Jesus gives this warning, and passes on. Recognising him at once as he who had cured him beside the pool, the man inquires about him of the bystanders, and learns now who he is. And he goes and tells the Jews; not, let us hope, from any malicious motive, or any desire to put an instrument into the hands of Christ's enemies. Considering where and how he had so long been lying, he may have known so little of all that had recently happened, as to imagine that he was at once pleasing the rulers, and doing a service to Jesus, by informing them about his cure.—But it was no new intelligence that he conveyed. The Jews, we presume, knew well enough who had effected this cure. But it was the first instance in which they had heard of Jesus' healing on the Sabbath-day—of itself in their eyes a violation of its sanctity; and as it would appear that, not content with this offence, he had added another in ordering the man to carry on that day a burden through the streets—a thing strictly and literally prohibited by the law—it may have gratified the Jews to be able to convict Jesus of a double breach of the Sabbath law by direct and indubitable evidence from the man's own lips. You can imagine the secret though malignant satisfaction with which they got and grasped this weapon, one at once of defence and of assault; how

they would use it in vindicating their rejection of Christ as a teacher sent from God; for could God send a man who would be guilty of such flagrant breaches of his law? how they would use it in carrying out those purposes of persecution already brooding in their breasts. Their hostility to Jesus, which had been deepening ever since his daring act of cleansing the temple, now reached its height. From this time forth—and it deserves to be especially noted as having occurred at so early a stage, inasmuch as it forms the key to much of our Lord's subsequent conduct—they sought to slay him, because he had done those things on the Sabbath-day. But though the purpose to slay him was formed, it was not expressed, nor attempted to be carried out. Things were not yet ripe for its execution. Jesus might be convicted as a Sabbath-breaker, and all the opprobrium of such a conviction be heaped upon his head; but as things then stood, it would not be possible to have the penalty of death inflicted on him upon that ground. They must wait and watch for an opportunity of accusing him of some crime which will carry that penalty even in the eyes of a Roman judge.

Though not serving them much in this respect, they have not to wait long till, in their very presence—so that they have no need to ask for other proof—Jesus commits a still higher offence than that of violating the Sabbath. Aware of the charges that they were bringing against him as to his conduct at the pool of Bethesda, he seizes upon some public opportunity when he could openly address the rulers; and in answer to the special accusation of having broken the Sabbath, he says to them, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” The rest into which my Father entered after his work of creation, of which your earthly Sabbath rest is but a type, was not one of absolute inactivity—of the suspension, cessation of his agency in and over the vast creation he had formed. He worketh on still; worketh on continuously, without distinction of days, through the Sabbath-day as through all days, sustaining, preserving, renewing, vivifying, healing. Were this work divine to cease, there would not be even that earthly Sabbath for you to rest in. And as he, my Father, worketh, so work I, his Son, knowing as little of distinction of days in my working as he. By process of nature, as you call it—that is, by the hand of my Father—a man is often cured on the Sabbath-day. And it is only what he thus does that I have done, and my authority for doing so is this, that I am his Son.’

Whatever difficulty the men to whom this defence of his alleged Sabbath-breaking was offered, may have had either in understanding its nature or appreciating its force, one thing is clear, that they did

at once and most clearly comprehend that in speaking of God as his Father in the way he did, Jesus was claiming to stand to God, not simply in the relationship of a child—such a relationship as that in which we all, as the creatures of his power and the preserved of his providence, may be regarded as standing—but in that of a close, personal, peculiar sonship belonging to him alone, involving in it, as all true filiation does, unity of nature between the Father and the Son. It was thus that the Jews understood Jesus to speak of the Father and of himself, when he so associated himself with the Father, as to imply that if his Father was not a breaker of the Sabbath in healing men upon that day, neither was he, his Son; and so they sought the more to kill him, because he had not only broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his own Father, making himself equal with God.

If the Jews had misunderstood Jesus, what was easier than for him to have said so; to have denied and repudiated the allegation that he had intended to claim any thing like equality with God? Instead of this, what does Jesus do? He goes on to reassert, to explain, and to expand what had been implied in the compendious expression he had employed. Any thing like such distinction between the Father and the Son as that the one would or could judge, or will, or act independently of the other—without or against the other—he emphatically and reiteratedly repudiates: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself;” “I can of my own self do nothing.” The very nature of the relationship forbade it that the Son ever would or could assert for himself any such independence of the Father as the creature, in its wilfulness and sinfulness, is apt to assert for himself. But though all such separation and independence of council and of action is here precluded, so complete is the concert that what things soever the Father doeth the same doeth the Son likewise. Some things that the great Divine Master Workman does, a superior scholar may copy or imitate. But Jesus does not say, what things the Father does, the Son does other things somewhat like them; but the same things, and whatever things the Father doeth, the same doeth the Son, and doeth them likewise, that is, in the very same manner, by the exercise of the same power, for the furtherance of the same ends.

In far greater works than that simply of healing, will the unity of action between them be made to appear. One of these greater works is that of quickening the dead, by the incommunicable prerogative of the Creator. This prerogative the Father and the Son have equally. As he wills, and by his will, the Father quickeneth; so too does



the Son. The highest form of life is that which is breathed into souls spiritually dead. This life is of the Son's imparting equally as of the Father's. It comes through the hearing of Christ's word; through a believing in the Father as he who sent the Son. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead—the spiritually dead—shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. Another work peculiar to divinity is that of judging; approving, condemning, assigning to every man at last, in strict accordance with what he is, and has been, and has done, his place and destiny. Who but the all-wise, all-just, all-gracious God is competent for such a task? but that task, in the outward execution of it, the Father has devolved upon the Son, giving him authority to execute it, because he is not simply the Son of God, in which character he needs not such authority to be conveyed to him; but because he is also the Son of man, and it is in that complex or mediatorial office with which he is invested, that he is to sit upon the Throne of Judgment at the last, when all the inhabitants of the earth shall stand before his tribunal. Should this then be a subject for marvel? for the hour was coming, though not yet come, when all that are in their graves shall hear Christ's voice and shall come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation. Having thus unfolded the great truth of the unity of will, purpose, and action, between the Father and the Son, Jesus ceases to speak of himself in the third person, and proceeds onward to the close of his address, to speak in the first person, and that in the plainest way,\* of the testimonies that had been

□ “I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true. Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved. He was a burning and a shining light; and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. I receive not honor from men. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek



borne to him, that of the Father, that of John, that of his own works, that of the Holy Scriptures, all of which these Jews had wilfully rejected. - Now the accused becomes the accuser. Now he who had been charged as a Sabbath-breaker, rises to the height of that very elevation which they had regarded him as a profane and blasphemous man for venturing to claim; and he tells these unbelieving Jews, as one knowing the hearts of all men, and entitled to judge, and exercising that very authority with which, as the Son of man, he had been clothed, he tells them, that they had not the love of God in them, nor his word abiding in them; that they did not believe Moses when he wrote of Him; that, much as they revered their Scriptures, they only believed in them so far as they tallied with their own thoughts and fancies. Still further, he declares that there was this great obstacle in the way of their receiving one who came to them as Jesus did, in the name of the Father, to do alone the Father's will, that they were all too busy seeking after the honor that came from man, minding earthly things, and seeking not the honor that came from the one only living and true God; attributing thus all their perverseness to moral causes, to motives operating within, over which they should have had control; this being their condemnation, that they would not come to him that they might have life. He would, but they would not.

If Jesus Christ were but a man, what are we to make of such a discourse as this? What are we to make of the first part of it, in which he speaks of the Father and his connection with him? What of the second part of it, in which he speaks to the Jews and of their treatment of him? We know not which would be the worst—the arrogance in the one direction, or the presumption and uncharitableness in the other—if this were but a man speaking of the Creator, and to his fellows. It can alone relieve him from the guilt of profane assumption towards God, and unlicensed liberty with man, to believe that Jesus was really that which the Jews regarded him as claiming to be, the Son of, the equal with the Father, whom all men should honor, even as they honor God.

But let me ask now your particular attention to the circumstances under which this marvellous discourse was spoken, and to the object which, in the first instance, as at first delivered, it was intended to serve. Jesus voluntarily, intentionally created the occasion for its delivery. The miracle here—the healing of the impotent man at the

not the honor that cometh from God only? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"

pool of Bethesda—was a wholly secondary or subordinate matter, intended to bring Christ into that relationship with the Jewish rulers which called for and gave its fitness and point to this address. Why did Jesus choose a Sabbath-day to walk in the porches of Bethesda? Why did he do what only on one or two occasions afterwards he did, instead of waiting to be applied to, himself single out the man and volunteer to heal him? Why did he not simply cure the man, but bid him also take up his bed and walk? He might have chosen another day, and then, in the story of the cure, we should have had but another instance added to the many of the exertion of our Lord's divine and beneficent power. He might have simply told the man to rise up and walk, and none could have told how the cure had been effected, or turned it into any charge. He chose that day, and he selected that man, and he laid on him the command he did, for the very purpose of bringing himself front to front with the Jewish rulers. At first the question between them seems to refer only to the right keeping of the Sabbath. Had Jesus as a man, as a Jew, broken the Sabbath law in curing a man upon that day? Had he broken it in telling the man he healed to carry his bed through the city? Had the Jews not misunderstood, overstrained the law, sticking to its letter, and violating its spirit? These were grave questions, with which, as we shall find, Jesus afterwards did deal, when on another Sabbath he volunteered another cure. But here Christ waives all lesser topics—that, among the rest, of the right interpretation of the Sabbath law—and uses the antecedent circumstances as the basis on which to assert, and then amplify and defend, the truth of his true and only sonship to the Father. His ministry in Judea was now about to close. Aware of the design against his life which had now been formed, and wishing to baffle it for a season, he retires to Galilee. But he will not leave Jerusalem till he has given one full and public testimony as to who and what he is, so that the Jews in continuing to reject him, shall not have it in their power to say that he has not revealed his own character, nor expressed to them the real grounds upon which their opposition to him is based.

Such was the special drift and bearing of the address of Jesus as originally delivered to the Jews. But is there nothing in its close applicable to ourselves and to all men in every age? The same kind of obstacles that raised such a barrier in the way of the Jews believing in Jesus, do they not still exist? If the spirit of pride and worldliness, a conventional piety and an extreme thirst for the applause and honor that cometh from man, occupy and engross our hearts, will they not indispose and render us unable to believe simply, heart-

ily, devotedly on Jesus Christ? Of one thing let us be assured, that whatever be our disposition and conduct towards him, his towards us is ever a longing desire to have us, keep us, bless us, save us; and that the one and only thing that stands in the way of our enjoying all the benefits of his salvation, is our own unwillingness; his lament over all that wander away from him being ever this, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

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## XVII.

### THE SYNAGOGUE OF NAZARETH.\*

IN the route commonly taken from Jerusalem to the sea of Galilee, one of the most interesting day's travel is that which carries you from Jenin across the three valleys into which, at its upper extremity, the great plain of Esdraelon divides, and up to Nazareth, as it lies embedded in the southern ridge of the hills of Galilee. Crossing the first valley, we skirted the base of the mountains of Gilboa, and paused for a few moments upon a gentle elevation, now occupied by a few houses of the humblest description, on which Jezreel, the ancient capital of Israel, once stood, with the palace of Ahab in its circuit, and the vineyard of Naboth hard by. Our eye wandered along the twelve or fourteen miles of dead-level that run from Jezreel to Carmel, and the figure of the great prophet running before the king's chariot rose before us. We turned round and gazed upon the slopes of Gilboa, and the tide of Saul's last battle seemed to roll over them, and the sounds of the funeral dirge of David to be lingering still among the hills. The crossing of the next valley carried us to the base of Little Hermon, where a small hamlet lies, consisting of a few miserable-looking hovels, surrounded by ill-kept gardens. This was the Shunem in which the house once stood which had in it the prophet's chamber; and these were the gardens in one of which the widow's son once sickened unto death. Leaving behind us the place which, in the old prophetic times, saw the dead child given back to his mother, climbing Little Hermon and descending on the other side, we entered another village which witnessed another dead son given back to another widowed mother, by Him who touched the bier, and said, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise." Here, in this village of Nain, we came for the first time on the traces of our Lord's Galilean ministry. The third plain passed, a steep ascent carried us

\* Luke 4 : 16-31.

to the summit of that range of hills which forms the northeastern boundary of the plain of Esdraelon. Descending, we came upon a circular, basin-shaped depression, girdled all round by a dozen or more swelling hill-tops that rise from three to four hundred feet above the valley they enclose. Near to the foot of the highest of these surrounding hills, nestled in a secluded upland hollow, lies the village of Nazareth. No village in Palestine is more like what it was in the days of Jesus Christ, and none more fitting to have been his residence during the greater part of his life on earth. The seclusion is perfect, greater even than that of Bethany, which on one side looks out openly upon the country that stretches away to the shore of the Dead sea. Nazareth is closed in on every side, offering to us an emblem of the seclusion of those thirty years which were passed there so quietly. Pure hill-breezes play over the village, and temper the summer heat. The soil around is rich, and yields the fairest flowers and richest fruits of Palestine. You seem shut out from the world, and yet you have but to climb a few hundred feet to the top of the overlooking hill, and one of the widest, finest prospects in all the Holy Land bursts upon your view. Away in the west, a sparkling light plays upon the waters of the Mediterranean, revealing a portion of the Great Sea that formed the highway to the isles of the Gentiles. The ridge of Carmel runs out into the waters, closing in the bold promontory on the side of which Elijah stood and discomfited the prophets of Baal. Southward, below your feet, stretches the great battle-plain of Palestine, behind which rises the hilly district of Samaria, through the opening between which and the mountains of Gilboa the eye wanders away eastward across the whole breadth of the Holy Land, till it rests upon that range, the everlasting eastern background of every Syrian prospect—the mountain range of Bashan and Gilead and Moab. Turning northward, the whole hill-country of Galilee lies spread out before us, the sea of Gennesaret hidden, but a glimpse of Safed obtained, the city set upon a hill, above and beyond which there rise the snowy heights of Hermon, called by the Arabs the Sheikh of the Mountains.

Up to the hill-top which commands this magnificent prospect, how often in childhood, youth, and early manhood must Jesus have ascended, to gaze—who shall tell us with what thoughts?—upon the chosen scene of his earthly ministry, and upon that sea over whose waters the glad tidings of salvation were to be borne to so many lands. It pleases us to think that so many years of our Lord's life were spent in such a home as that which Nazareth supplied; one so retired, so rich in natural beauty, with glimpses of the wide world



around for the morning or evening hours. There it was, in the fields below the village, that he had watched how the lilies grew, and seen with what a gorgeous dress, in coloring above that of kingly purple, their Creator clothed them. There, in the gardens, he had noticed how the smallest of all seeds grew into the tallest of herbs. There, outside the house, he had seen two women grinding at one mill; inside, a woman hiding the leaven in the dough. There, in the market-place, he had seen the five sparrows sold for the two farthings. The sheep-walks of the hills and the vineyards of the valleys had taught him what were the offices of the good shepherd and the careful vine-dresser; and all the observations of those thirty years were treasured up to be drawn upon in due time, and turned into the lessons by which the world was to be taught wisdom.

No means are left for ascertaining what impression was made during these thirty years upon the inmates of his home, the play-mates of his boyhood, the associates of his youth, the villagers generally in the midst of whom he grew up. It may readily be believed that the gentleness, the truthfulness, the lovingness displayed by him, must have won respect. Yet we can imagine, too, that the unearthly purity and sanctity of such a childhood and such a manhood may have created an awe, a sense of distance and separation, which in meaner spirits might deepen into something like aversion and dislike. At last he leaves them, and is not seen in Nazareth for many months. But the strangest tidings about him are afloat through the village. First, they hear of what happened at his baptism in the Jordan, then of what he did a few miles off at Cana, then of his miracles in Jerusalem, then of his curing the nobleman's son of Capernaum; and now he is once more among them, and the whole village is moved. The Sabbath-day comes round. He had been in the habit all through these thirty years of attending in the synagogue; sitting there quietly and unobtrusively, taking part in the prayers and praises, listening to the reading of the law and of the prophets, and to the explanations of the passages which were read, with what kind and amount of self-application none of all around him knew. But how will he comport himself in the new character that he has assumed? The synagogue is crowded with men among whom he has been brought up, all curious to see and hear. The earlier part of the service goes on as usual. The opening prayer is recited; the opening psalm is chanted; the portion from the law, from the book of Moses, is read by the ordinary minister; the time has come for the second reading—that of some portion of the prophets—when Jesus steps forth and stands in the reader's place. There is no challenging of his right to do so. It is

not a right belonging exclusively to priest or Levite; any Jew of any tribe might exercise it. But there was a functionary in every synagogue regularly appointed to the office. This functionary, in this instance, at once gives way, and hands to Jesus the roll of the prophet out of which, according to the calendar, the reading for the day is to be taken. It is the roll of the prophet Isaiah. Jesus opens it, and whether it was that the opening verses of the sixty-first chapter were those actually appointed for that day's service, or whether it was that the roll opened at random and these verses were the first that presented themselves, or that Jesus, from the whole book, purposely selected the passage, he read as follows: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." And stopping there, in the middle of the sentence, he closed the book, gave it to the minister, and sat down upon the raised seat of the reader, taking the attitude usually assumed by Jewish teachers. There was a breathless stillness. The eyes of all that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. "This day," said Jesus, "is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears."

It was a Scripture universally understood to be descriptive of the coming Messiah, his office, and his work. Jesus gives no reason for appropriating and applying it to himself; he offers nothing in the shape of argument or evidence in favor of his being indeed the Christ, the Anointed of the Holy Ghost. He contents himself with the simple authoritative assertion of the fact. We have indeed but the first sentence given that he spoke on this occasion. What followed, however, we may well believe to have been an exposition of the passage read, as containing an account of the true character, ends, and objects of his mission as the Christ of God; the telling who the poor were to whom he brought good tidings, who the bruised and the broken-hearted were whom he came to heal, who the bound were that he came to liberate, who the blind whose eyes he came to open, what that year was he came to usher in—the long year of grace which still runs on, in the course of which there is acceptance for all of us with God, through Christ. As Jesus spake of these things—spake with such ease, such grace, such dignity—the first impression made upon the Nazarenes, his old familiar friends, was that of astonishment and admiration. He had got no other, no better education than that which the poorest of them had received. He had attended none of the higher schools in any of the larger towns,

had sat at the feet of none of their chief rabbis to be instructed in the law; yet no rabbi of the schools could speak with greater fluency, greater authority, greater confidence. Soon, however, as from the mere manner, they began to turn their thoughts to the substance of this discourse, and began to realize what the position really was which Jesus was assuming—that it was nothing short of the very highest that ever any son of man was to reach; that it was as the Lord's anointed Christ that he was speaking, and speaking to them as the poor, the blind, the captives, to whom he was to render such services—the admiration turns into envy. Who is he that is arrogating to himself all this dignity, authority, and power? who is speaking to them as so immeasurably his inferiors, as needing so much his help? Is not this the son of honest, plain, old Joseph, whom we all so well remember as our village carpenter? His brethren and his sisters, are they not here beside us in the synagogue, listening, apparently with no great delight or approval, to this new strain in which their brother has begun to speak? He the Messiah, the opener of our eyes, the healer of our hearts, our deliverer from bondage! Before he asks us to believe any such thing of him, let him show us some sign from heaven; do some of those miracles that they say he has done elsewhere, particularly at Capernaum. If he wanted us, who have all known him so well from his childhood, to believe in him as a prophet, he should have come to us first, convinced us first, unfolded his credentials to us first, wrought his first miracles here in Nazareth. Jealousy heightens the offence that envy had created, and ere long the whole company in that synagogue is looking at him askance. Jesus sees this, and turning from his former subject of discourse, tells them that he sees and knows it, lays open their hearts to them, puts the very words into their lips that they were ready to utter, and proceeds to vindicate himself for not showing any special sign to his fellow-townsmen, by quoting two instances in which Elijah and Elisha, the two great workers of miracles among the prophets, passed over all their fellow-countrymen to show favor to the Sidonian widow and the Syrian officer. There is nothing that men dislike more than that the evil and the bitter things hidden in their breasts should be brought to light. It aggravates this dislike when the discoverer and revealer of their thoughts is the very person against whom the malignant sentiment is cherished. Should he remain calm and unimpassioned, neither taken by surprise, nor betraying irritation, they are so much the more incensed. So felt the Nazarenes under the address of our Lord; and when he proceeded to assume the mantle of Elijah and Elisha, as if he were of the same order with



these great prophets of the olden time, it is more than they can any longer bear. They will be lectured no more in such a way by the son of the carpenter. They rise, they rush upon him, they thrust him out of the village, and on to the brow of a precipice over which they would have hurled him; but it pleased him to put forth that power, and to lay upon them that spell which he laid upon the high priest's band in the garden of Gethsemane. They are hurrying him to the brow of the hill; he turns, he looks, the spell is on them, their hands drop powerless by their sides; he passes through the midst of them, they offer no resistance, and before they recover themselves he is gone.

About two miles from Nazareth there is a hill which shows, upon the side facing the plain of Esdraelon, a long and steep descent. The monks of the middle ages—the determiners of most of the sites of the holy places in Palestine—fixed on this as the precipice over which the angry Nazarenes designed to throw our Saviour, and gave it the name of the Mount of Precipitation. The very distance of this mount from the village goes far to disprove the tradition regarding it. But though this distance had been less, it could not have been the place, for it is distinctly stated by the evangelist that it was a brow of the hill on which the city was built from which they intended to cast him. Modern travellers are all agreed that it must have been from some part of the rocky cliff which overhangs the oldest quarter of the present village of Nazareth that Jesus was about to have been thrown. This rocky cliff extends for some distance along the hill on which Nazareth is built, and shows at different points perpendicular descents of from thirty to forty feet, which, as they have been filled up below with accumulations of rubbish, must originally have been much deeper. Any one of these would so far answer to the description given by the evangelist. In taking this view, however, it is necessary to suppose that on leaving the synagogue, with the deliberate intention of killing him, the infuriated Nazarenes either forced Jesus up the height from which they designed afterwards to cast him, or made a circuit up and round the hill, in order to reach the intended spot. The same ascent which it must have been needful thus to make I made, in company with Rev. Mr. Zeller, who for some years has been resident as a missionary in Nazareth. On getting to the top of the ridge, we found ourselves on a nearly level plateau of considerable extent. There were no houses on this plateau, but Mr. Zeller pointed out to us here and there those underground cisterns which are the almost infallible signs of houses having once been in the neighborhood. Here, then, on this plateau, a portion if not the whole of the ancient Nazareth may have stood. If it was so—if even a few houses of the old vil-



lage were here—then, as we know it to have been the rule that, wherever it was possible, the synagogue was built on the highest ground in or near the city or village to which it belonged, it must have been on this elevated ground that the synagogue of Nazareth stood, not far from the brow of the hill. It seems more likely that the Nazarenes should, in the frenzy of the moment, have attempted to throw our Lord from a precipice quite at hand than that, acting on a deliberate purpose, they should have spent some time, and climbed a hill in order to its execution.

But turning now from the locality and outward circumstances of this event in our Saviour's life, let us try to enter into its meaning and spirit. So far as we know, this was the first occasion on which Jesus addressed an audience of his countrymen in the synagogue on the Sabbath-day; it would appear indeed to have been the only one on which he took the duty of the reader as well as that of the exhorter. It was a common enough thing for any one, even a stranger, to be asked, when the proper service of the synagogue was over, to address some words of instruction or encouragement to the audience. The gospels tell us how frequently Jesus made use of this opportunity; and you may remember how at Antioch and Pisidia, after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto Paul and Barnabas saying, "Men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." The peculiarity of the incident now before us lay in this, that Jesus first read the passage from the prophets, and then grounded directly upon it the address which he delivered. In this respect we might regard it as the first sermon ever preached; the text chosen, and the discourse uttered by our Lord himself. Had these Nazarenes, who, in their insatiate and zealous craving after signs and wonders, wanted him only to do the same or greater things than he had done in Capernaum, but known how highly honored, far above that of its being made a mere theatre for the exhibition of divine power, their synagogue was, in being the first place on earth in which that instrument was employed which has been so mighty through God to the pulling down of the strongholds of the ungodly and the upbuilding of the church, their vanity might have been gratified; but they slighted the privilege thus enjoyed, and so lost the benefit.

The body of the first synagogue sermon of our Saviour has been lost. The text and introductory sentence alone remain; but how much do they reveal to us of the nature, the needfulness, the preciousness of those spiritual offices which our Divine Redeemer came on earth to execute, and which he still stands waiting to discharge

towards our sinful humanity! It was to a company of a few hundreds at the most that the words of Jesus were spoken in the synagogue at Nazareth; but that desk from which they were spoken was turned into the centre of a circle whose bounds are the ends of the earth, and that audience has multiplied to take in the whole family of mankind. To the men of every land in every age Jesus has been thus proclaiming what the great ends are of his mission to this earth. To open blinded eyes, to heal bruised and bleeding and broken hearts, to unlock the doors, and unloose the fetters of the imprisoned and the bound; to announce to the poor, the meek, the humble that theirs is the kingdom of heaven; and to proclaim to all that this is the year of our Lord, the long year of Christ that takes in all the centuries down to his second coming, the year in every day and every hour and every moment of which our heavenly Father waits to forgive, receive, accept all contrite ones who come to him. Such, our Saviour tells us, is that great work of grace and power for whose accomplishment he has been anointed of the Father and replenished by the Spirit. — In that high office to which he has thus been set apart, and for which he has been thus qualified, we all need his services. There is a spiritual blindness which Jesus only can remove; a spiritual imprisonment from which he only can release; a deadly spiritual malady eating in upon our heart which he alone can heal. And shall he not do all this for us, if we feel our need of its being done, since the doing of it is the very design of his most gracious ministry among the sinful children of men? Let us not do him the injustice to believe that he will be indifferent to the accomplishment of the very errand of mercy on which he came, or that he will refuse in ours or in any case to enlighten and emancipate, bind up and heal.

It seems to us to throw a distinct, and, though not a very broad, yet a very clear and beautiful beam of light on the graciousness of our Lord's character, that instead of reading the number of verses ordinarily recited, he stopped where he did in his quotation from Isaiah. Had he gone on, he should have said, "to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God." Why not go on, why pause thus in the middle of the sentence? not assuredly that he meant either to deny or hide the truth, that the day of vengeance would follow upon the acceptable year, if the opportunities of that year were abused and lost; but that then and now, it is his chosen and most grateful office to throw wide open the arms of the heavenly mercy, and invite all to throw themselves into them and be saved.

But though he came in the Spirit to those among whom he had

been brought up, though he came thus to his own, by his own he was not received, by his own he was despised and rejected. His treatment at Nazareth was a foreshadowing of the treatment given generally to him by his countrymen, and terminating in his crucifixion on Calvary. The rude handling in the Galilean village, the binding, the scourging, the crucifying in the Jewish capital, were types of that still rougher spiritual handling, that crucifying of our Lord afresh which the world, in every age, has gone on repeating. It was their very familiarity with him in the intercourse of daily life which proved such a snare to the Nazarenes, and tempted them into their great offence. Let us fear lest our familiarity with him of another kind—the frequency with which we hear about him, and read about him, and have him in one way or other set before us—blind our eyes and blunt our hearts to the wonders of his redeeming love, and the exceeding riches of his grace and power.

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## XVIII.

### — FIRST SABBATH IN CAPERNAUM, AND FIRST CIRCUIT OF GALILEE.\*

THE first eight months of our Lord's ministry were spent, as we have seen, in Judea. By the sign from heaven, by the Baptist's proclamation, by Christ's own words and deeds, he was presented to the rulers and to the people as the Son of God, the Messiah. His character was misunderstood; his claims were rejected. At Jerusalem a plot against his life was formed; it was no longer safe for him to reside where the Jewish authorities had power. Jesus retired to Galilee. John 4:1-3. Besides the purpose of placing himself beyond the reach of the scribes and Pharisees of Jerusalem, another circumstance seems to have had its influence in directing Christ's footsteps into Galilee. He heard that John was cast into prison. The Baptist's work was over; the labors of the Forerunner were closed; the ground was open for Jesus to occupy. Hitherto, in his earlier Judean ministry, he had neither publicly taught in the synagogues, nor openly and indiscriminately healed the sick, nor called any other disciples to his side than those who voluntarily and temporarily followed him.† We may safely say, then, that prior to his

\* Matt. 4:12-22, 23-25; Mark 1:21-39; Luke 4:42-44.

† His disciples, indeed, in imitation of John's practice, had begun to baptize, but as soon as "the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus had



appearance in Galilee, he had taken no steps either to proclaim the advent of the kingdom, or, by the selection of a band of chosen adherents, to lay the foundation of that new economy which was to take the place of the one which was now waxing old and was ready to vanish away. It looks as if, before fully and openly entering on the task of providing a substitute for that Judaic economy which his own kingdom was to overturn, Jesus had gone up to Jerusalem, and given to the head and representatives of the Jewish commonwealth the choice of receiving or rejecting him as their Messiah. It was not, at least, till after he had been so rejected in Judea, that he began in Galilee to preach the gospel of the kingdom, (Matt. 1:15,) and to plant the first seeds of that tree whose leaves were to be for the healing of the nations. This helps to explain at once the marked difference between Christ's course of conduct during the period which immediately succeeded his baptism, which was passed in Judea, and the laborious months in Galilee which followed, and the marked silence regarding the former which is preserved by the first three evangelists, who all make our Lord's ministry begin in Galilee, and contain no allusion to any thing as happening between the temptation in the wilderness and the opening of his ministry there. Nor do they allude to any visits of Jesus to Jerusalem prior to those which he made after his final departure from Galilee, and which preceded his crucifixion. With them, up to that time, Galilee appears as the exclusive theatre of our Lord's labors. It is to the supplemental gospel of St. John that we are indebted for all our knowledge of the memorable incidents in Judea, which preceded the first preaching in the synagogue of Nazareth. We can understand this singular silence of the first three evangelists, if we regard our Lord's earlier appearance and residence in Judea as constituting rather a preliminary dealing with the Jews, in the way of testing their disposition and capacity to welcome him as their own last and greatest prophet, than as forming an integral part of that work whereby the foundations of the Christian church were laid.

Rejected by the chiefs of the people in the capital, Jesus comes to Galilee. There, in the synagogue of the town in which he had made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) he left Judea, and departed again into Galilee." John 4:1-3. It would seem to have been a sudden impulse of zeal in their Master's cause which led those first disciples to engage so eagerly in baptizing—a zeal which, instead of checking or rebuking, Jesus dealt with by quietly cutting off the occasion for its display. By his own removal to Galilee, an entirely new state of things was ushered in, and by John's imprisonment his baptism ceased; nor do we read anywhere of a Galilean baptism by the disciples of Jesus.



lived so many years, he first publicly proclaims his office and his work, as the healer of the broken-hearted, the restorer of sight to the blind, the deliverer of the captives, the preacher of the gospel to the poor—an office and a work which had nothing of confinement in it, nothing restricting it to any one age or country. But there, too, by his fellow-townsmen at Nazareth, as by the rulers of the capital, he is rejected, and so he descends to the shores of the sea of Galilee. Walking by these shores, he sees first Andrew and Peter casting a net into the sea. He says to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. Straightway they leave all and follow him." A little farther on, another pair of brothers, James and John, are in their boat mending their nets. He calls them in the same way, and they leave their boat and their nets, their father and the hired servants, and follow. He was not speaking to strangers, to those previously ignorant or indisposed to follow him. Andrew was one of the two disciples of John who had heard the Baptist say, "Behold the Lamb of God," and who had followed Jesus. The other of these two disciples was John. Andrew had brought his brother Peter to Jesus; and though it is not said that John had done the same with his brother James, the latter must already have been acquainted with Christ. Andrew, Peter, and John had followed Jesus from Bethabara to Cana, and had witnessed there the first of his miracles. They had been up at Jerusalem, and seen the miracles which Jesus wrought at the first Passover which he attended. They may have taken part in the baptizing, may have been with Jesus at the well of Jacob. Mention is made of disciples of Jesus being there with him, and who so likely to be among them as those who first followed him from Bethabara? But they do not appear as yet to have attached themselves permanently to his person, nor to have attended him on his return from his second visit to the metropolis, nor to have been with him at Nazareth. The stopping of the baptisms, the imprisonment of John, the scattering of his disciples, may have thrown them into some doubt as to the intentions of the new Teacher. For a time at least they had returned to their old occupation as fishermen, and were busily employed at it when Jesus met them; but his voice fell upon ears that welcomed its sound, his command upon spirits that were ready to obey. Not that they understood as yet that the summons was one to relinquish finally their earthly calling. The present was but a preliminary invitation to follow Jesus, and chiefly by hearing what he said, and watching what he did, to be instructed by him in the higher art of catching men. It was not till weeks afterwards that they were solemnly set apart as his apostles.

In the meantime, however, they accompanied him into Capernaum. The entrance of Jesus, attended by the two well-known brothers—who, from the mention of hired servants belonging to one of them, we may believe, ranked high among their craft—was soon known throughout all the town. The inhabitants of Capernaum had already heard enough about him to excite their liveliest curiosity. That curiosity had the keenest edge put on it by the manner in which the cure of the nobleman's child had been effected. And now he is among them. It would be a crowded synagogue on the Sabbath-day when he stood up there to preach for the first time the gospel of the kingdom of God. Nothing of what he said upon this occasion has been preserved. The impression and effect upon his auditors are alone recorded: "They were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes;" "his word was with power." Mark 1:22; Luke 4:32. The scribes, the ordinary instructors of the people, presented themselves simply as expositors of the law, written and traditional, claiming no separate or independent authority, content with simply discharging the office of commentators, and resting their individual claims to respect on the manner in which that office was fulfilled. But here is a teacher of quite a new order, who busies himself with none of those difficult or disputed questions about which the rabbis differed; who speaks to the people about a new kingdom—the kingdom of God—to be set up among them, and that in a tone of earnestness, certainty, authority, to which they were unaccustomed. What can this new kingdom be, and what position in it can this Jesus of Nazareth occupy?

Of one thing they are speedily apprized, that it is a kingdom opposed to that of Satan, intended to destroy it. For among them was a man possessed with a devil, who, as Jesus stood speaking to them, broke in upon his discourse, and, with a voice so loud as to startle the whole synagogue, cried out, addressing himself to Jesus, "Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth; art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." He speaks in the name of others, as representing the whole company of evil spirits, to whom, at that time, here and there, it had been allowed to usurp the seat of will and power in human breasts, and so to possess the men in whom they dwelt as to strip them of their volition and conscious identity, and to turn them into human demons. But how came this human demon into the synagogue, and what prompted him to utter such cries of horror and of spite? Was this devil as much beside himself as the poor man in whom he dwelt? Had the presence, the look, the words of Jesus such a power over

him that as the man could not regulate or restrain his own actions, so neither could the devil regulate or restrain his thoughts and words? His exclamations sound to our ear like the mad, involuntary, impotent outcries of the vassals of a kingdom who feel that the reins of empire are passing out of their hands, but who cannot give them up without telling who the greater than they is who has come to dispossess them of their power.

Whatever may be thought of the kind of pressure under which the devil who possessed this man acted; whether the testimony he gave to our Lord's character be regarded as free and spontaneous, intended rather to injure than to honor; or whether it be regarded as unwillingly drawn forth by close personal contact with the Holy One, the testimony so given was not welcomed by Christ. It came unsuitably from a quarter whence no witness should be borne to him, nor was wished for, as it came unseasonably, when premature revelations of his true character were not desired. In other instances as well as this Jesus did not suffer the devils to speak, "because they knew him," acting as to them on the same principle on which he often cautioned those whom he healed and his own disciples not to make him known, seeking by such repression to prevent any hurrying forward before its time of what he knew would be the closing catastrophe of his career. But though refused thus, and as it were rejected by our Lord, its first wild, impatient utterances all that it was permitted to give forth, this voice is most striking to us now as a testimony from the demon-world, through which a knowledge of who Jesus truly was seems so rapidly to have circulated. The prince of darkness, in his temptation of our Lord a year before, seems himself to have been in some doubt, as he put the question so often, "If thou be the Son of God." But no doubt was entertained by the devils who came, as Luke tells us, "out of many, crying out and saying, Thou art Christ, the Son of God." Luke 4:41. Some have thought that those demoniacs whom Christ cured were lunatics, and nothing more; men whose deranged and disordered intellects were soothed down into calmness and order by the gentle yet firm voice and look and power of Christ. But what are we to make of the unique testimony that so many of them gave to Christ's Messiahship and Sonship to God, and that at the very commencement of his ministry? Were lunatics the only ones who knew him? or whence got they such knowledge and such faith?

Accepting, with whatever mystery the whole subject of demoniac possession is clothed, the simple account of the evangelists, it does appear most wonderful—the quick intelligence, the wild alarm, the

terror-striking faith that then pervaded the demon-world, as if all the spirits of hell who had been suffered to make human bodies their habitation, grew pale at the very presence of Jesus, and could not but cry out in the extremity of their despair.

“Hold thy peace,” said Jesus to the devil in the synagogue, “and come out of him.” The man was seen to fall, torn as by violent convulsions; a loud, inarticulate, fiendish cry was heard to issue from his lips; (Mark 1:36; Luke 4:35;) hale and unhurt, the devil gone, the man himself again, he rose to converse with those around, and to return to his home and friends. Amazement beyond description seized at once on all who saw or heard of what had happened. Men said to one another, in the synagogue, on the streets, by the high-ways, ‘What thing is this, what a word is this! for with authority he commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him. And immediately (it could scarce well have been otherwise) the fame of Him went out into every place of the country, and spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.’ Mark 1:27, 28; Luke 4:36, 37. Chiefly, however, in Capernaum did the excitement prevail, begun by the cure of the demoniac in the synagogue, quickened by another cure that followed within an hour or two. The service of the synagogue closed before the mid-day meal. At its close Jesus accepted an invitation to go to the house of Simon and Andrew. These brothers, as we know, were natives of Bethsaida, and had hitherto resided there. But recently they had removed to Capernaum. Peter having married, and perhaps taken up his abode in the house of his mother-in-law, James and John were also of the invited guests. Jesus did not know that the house he went to was one of sickness, and his ignorance in this respect creates the belief that it was the first time he had entered it. But soon he hears that the great fever (it is the physician Luke who in this way describes it) has seized upon Simon’s wife’s mother. They tell him of it; he goes to, bends kindly over her, takes her by the hand, rebukes the fever. The cure is instantaneous and complete. She rises, as if no disease had ever weakened her, with glad and grateful spirit to wait upon Jesus and the rest. And so within that home kindly hands were provided, like those of Martha at Bethany, to minister to the Saviour’s wants during the busiest, most toilsome period of his life, when, in season and out of season, early in the morning and far on often in the night, he came and went, living longer under that roof of Peter’s house at Capernaum, than under any other that sheltered him after his public ministry had begun. This cure, too, was noised abroad through the city. Here was an opportunity not to be lost, for who could tell but that



next morning Jesus will be gone? Though it was the Sabbath, Jesus had not scrupled to eject the devil and rebuke the fever; but the people could not so easily get over their scruples. They wait till the sun has set before they apply to this new and strange physician. But meanwhile all that were diseased in Capernaum, and all that were possessed, were brought. All the city had gathered together at the door of Peter's house. The sun goes down, and Jesus steps out into that bustling, anxious crowd; he lays his hand on every one of the diseased (Luke 4:40) and heals them, and casts out all the spirits with his word. The stars would be shining brightly in the heavens ere the busy blessed work was done, and within a few hours a city which numbered many thousand inhabitants saw disease of every kind banished from its borders.

After the excitement and fatigue of such a day, Jesus may lay his head peacefully on his pillow, and take the rest that such labor has earned. But long before the others—while yet they are all sleeping in Simon's house around him—rising up a great while before day, he goes out into a solitary place to pray. Was it on his own account that Jesus thus retired? Was his spirit too much under the distracting influence which such a scene of bustle and excitement as he had passed through the day before, was fitted to exert? Did he feel the need to calm the inward tumult by silent and solitary communion with heaven? As we follow his footsteps, let us be careful to notice and to remember in what circumstances it was that Christ resorted to special, solitary, continued prayer. But in leaving Capernaum, alone and so early, Jesus had in view the state of others as well as his own. He was well aware how apt, in his case, the office of the healer, the wonder-worker, was to overshadow that of the teacher, the preacher of the glad tidings; how ready the inhabitants of Capernaum already were to hail and honor him in this one character, however little they might be disposed to regard or obey him in the other. He had done enough of that one kind of work, had got enough of that one kind of homage, there. And so, when, after an eager search for him, he is found—and Simon and the disciples tell him that all men were seeking for him, and the people when they came up entreat him that he should not depart from them (compare Mark 1:36, 38, and Luke 4:42, 43)—Jesus says to the one, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also;" and to the other, "I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also, for therefore am I sent." He did not, indeed, forsake the city that had treated him so differently from his own Nazareth. He chose it as the place of his most frequent residence, the centre of his manifold labors, the scene of many



CHRIST'S MIRACLES OF HEALING

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of his most memorable discourses and miracles. — But now he must not rest on the favor which the healings of this wonderful day have won for him. And for a time he left Capernaum, and “went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan.” Matt. 4: 23–25.

We read of nine departures from and returns to Capernaum in the course of the eighteen months of our Lord’s Galilean ministry; of three extensive tours through all the towns and villages of the district like the one now described; and of five or six more limited ones. Had the three evangelists not been so sparing in their notices of time and place; had they not often shown such entire disregard to the mere order of time, in order to bring together incidents or discourses which were alike in character; could we have traced, as we cannot do, the footsteps of our Saviour from place to place, from month to month, as he set forth on these missionary rounds through Galilee, made, let us remember, all on foot, we should have had a year and a half before us of varied and almost unceasing toil, the crowded activities of which would have filled us with wonder. As it is, a general conception of how these months were spent is all that we can reach. To give distinctness to that conception, let us remember what, in extent of surface and in the character and numbers of its population, that district of country was to which these pedestrian journeys of our Saviour were confined.

Galilee, the most northern of the three divisions of Palestine, is between fifty and sixty miles in length, and from thirty to forty in breadth. A three-days’ easy walk would take you from Nain, on the south, to Cesarea Philippi in the north—which seem to have been the limits in these directions of our Saviour’s circuits. Less than two days’ travel will carry you from the shores of the sea of Galilee to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. Galilee presented thus an area somewhat larger than Lancashire and somewhat smaller than Yorkshire. So far, therefore, as the mere distances were concerned, it would not take long—not more than a week or two—to travel round and through it. But then in the Saviour’s days it was more densely populated than either of the English counties I have named. Josephus, who



knew it well, speaks of 204 towns and villages, the smallest of them containing above 15,000 inhabitants. Making an allowance for exaggeration, the population of the province must have been about three millions—as crowded a population as any manufacturing district in any of the western kingdoms of Europe now presents. And this population was of a very mixed character. If the majority were of Jewish descent, there were so many Phœnicians, Syrians, Arabs, Greeks, and others mingled with them, that we may be almost certain that Jesus never addressed any large assembly in which there were not Gentiles as well as Jews. There cannot be a greater mistake than to imagine that, in selecting Capernaum, on the shores of the lake of Gennesaret, as his headquarters, and Galilee as his chosen field of labor, Jesus was retiring from the populous Judea to a remote and unfrequented region. In those days there was much more life and bustle in Galilee than in Judea. So far as both the numbers and character of its population were concerned, it was a much better, more hopeful theatre for such evangelistic labors as those of Jesus. The people, though no less national in their spirit, were much less infected with ecclesiastical prejudice. The seed had thus a better soil to fall upon. Though a Roman governor was placed over them, the scribes and Pharisees had great power in Jerusalem, as they proved in effecting the crucifixion. Herod Antipas, who ruled over Galilee, had none of the jealousies of the Jewish Sanhedrim; and in point of fact, does not appear till the last to have taken much interest in, or in any way to have interfered with the proceedings of Jesus. So long as he confined himself to the work of a religious teacher, Herod had no desire to meddle with his doings; and even if he had, Jesus had but to cross the lake of Galilee, to put himself beyond his power by placing himself under the protection of Philip, the gentlest and most humane of the Herods.

Well adapted every way as Galilee was for our Lord's peculiar work—the laying of the first foundations of the Christian faith, a faith which was to spread over the whole earth—Capernaum was equally fitted to be the centre whence his labors were to radiate. Looked at as you find it marked upon the map of Galilee, it does not occupy any thing like a central position. But looked at in relation to the population and to the means of transit, a better centre could not have been selected. Wherever its site was, it lay on the northwestern shore of the sea of Galilee, close upon, if not within the plain of Gennesaret.\*

\* After visiting the ruins of Khan Mineyeh and Tell Hum, the writer had no hesitation in deciding in favor of the latter as more likely to have been the site of Capernaum.

This plain—three miles long and two miles broad—was then dotted with villages teeming with population, and of the most exuberant fertility. “One may call the place,” says the Jewish historian, “the ambition of nature, where it forces those plants that are naturally enemies to one another to agree together; it is a happy contention of the seasons, as if every one of them laid claim to this country.” While all round its shores the sea of Galilee saw towns and villages thronged with an agricultural and manufacturing population, itself teemed with a kind of wealth that gave large occupation to the fisherman. How numerous the boats were that once skimmed its surface, and how large the numbers employed as fishermen, may be gathered from the fact that in the wars with the Romans two hundred small vessels were once collected for the only naval action in which the Jews ever engaged. Remembering that the lake is only thirteen miles long and five or six miles broad, it is not too much, perhaps, to say that never did so small a sheet of water see so many keels cutting its surface, or so many human habitations circling round and shadowing its waves, as did the sea of Galilee in the days of Jesus Christ.

Now all is silent there; lonely and most desolate. Till last year, but a single boat floated upon its waters. On its shores, Tiberias in ruins and Magdala composed of a few wretched hovels are all that remain. You may ride round and round the empty beach, and, these excepted, never meet a human being nor pass a human habitation. Capernaum, Chorazin, Bethsaida are gone. Here and there you stumble over ruins, but none can tell you exactly what they were. They knew not, those cities of the lake, the day of their visitation; their names and their memory have perished.



## THE MINISTRY IN GALILEE.

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### I.

#### THE TWO HEALINGS—THE LEPER AND THE PARALYTIC.\*

IN describing our Lord's first circuit through Galilee, the evangelist tells us that "they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them." Matt. 4:24. How many and how varied were the cures effected within the course of this first itineracy of our Lord can only be conceived by remembering how numerous were the towns and villages through which he passed, and how large the population with which, one way or other, he was brought into contact.† Remembering this, we may believe that within a week or two after his first departure from Capernaum more healings were effected than the whole put together, of which any specific record has been preserved in the four gospels.

There was one form of disease, however, which is not noticed in St. Matthew's compendious description—a disease peculiar enough in its own character, but to which an additional peculiarity attached from the manner in which it was dealt with by the Mosaic law. However infectious, however deadly, however incurable, no disease but one was held to render its victim ceremonially unclean. Such uncleanness was stamped by the law upon the leper alone. This strange, creeping, spreading, loathsome, fatal disease appears to have been selected as the one form of bodily affliction to stand, in the legal impurity attached to it, and in the penalties visited on that impurity, as a type of the deep, inward, pervading, corrupting, destroying malady of sin.

Among the Jews the leper was excommunicated. Cut off from the congregation of the people, he had to live apart, enjoying only such society as those afflicted with the same disease could offer. He

\* Matt. 8:2-4; Mark 1:40-45, 2:1-12; Luke 5:12-26.

† Earlier Years, pp. 181, 182.



had to bear upon his person the emblems of sorrow and of death ; had to wear the rent garments which those wore who were weeping for the dead ; to shave his head and keep it bare as those must do who had touched the dead—himself the living dead, for whom those emblems of mourning needed to be assumed. His face half covered, he had to go about crying, “Unclean, unclean,” to warn all others off, lest they should come too near to him.

From what we know of the prevalence of this disease, it may be believed that there were many lepers in Galilee when our Lord made his first journey through it—gathered here and there into small and miserable communities. Even among these the tidings of the wonderful cures that were being effected would circulate, for the segregation was not so complete as to prevent all intercourse ; and when these poor exiles from their fellows heard of many being healed whose complaints were as much beyond all human remedy as theirs, the hope might spring up in their hearts that the Great Healer’s powers extended even to their case. But which of them had faith enough to make the trial—to break through the legal fences imposed, and go into any of the cities in which Jesus was, and throw himself upon his sympathy for succor ? One such there was—the first of those so afflicted who ventured to approach the Lord ; and his case on that account was selected for special reference by all the three evangelists. He came to Jesus “when he was in a certain city.”\* He had never seen the Lord before, or seen him only at a distance, among a crowd. He could have known or heard but little more about him than what the voice of rumor had proclaimed. Yet so soon as he recognizes him, see with what reverence he kneels and worships and falls on his face before him, (Luke 5:12,) and hear how he salutes and pleads, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” Perhaps Jesus had never seen a man prostrate himself in his presence as this man did. Certainly, Jesus was never before addressed in words so few and simple, yet so full of reverence, earnestness, faith, submission. He called Jesus LORD. Was this the first time that Jesus had been so addressed ? Sir, Rabbi, Master—these were the terms in which Andrew, and Nathanael, and Nicodemus, and the woman of Samaria, and the nobleman of Capernaum had addressed him. None of them had spoken to him as this leper did. If, indeed, the miraculous draught of fishes by which Peter had been finally summoned away from his old occupation had already occurred, then it would

\* Had the name of that city been given it might have helped to trace the course that Jesus was taking, but here, as in many other instances, the means of identification are denied.

be from his lips that this title was first heard coming, when he fell down at Jesus' feet exclaiming, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." That, however, is uncertain; but though it were true, how much had Simon to elevate his conception of Christ's character—how little this leper! One wonders, indeed, how far he had got in his idea of who this Jesus—this healer of diseases—was. All that we can know is that he chose the highest title that he knew of, and bestowed it on him. "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst." No hesitation as to the power; no presumption or dictation as to the will. Upon that free will, upon that almighty power, he casts himself. "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Jesus instantly went forward—went close to him—put forth his hand and touched him. His disciples hold back; a strange shuddering sensation passes through the hearts of the onlookers, for, by the law of Moses, it was forbidden to touch a leper. He who touched a leper himself became unclean. Yet at once, without hesitation at the time—without acting afterwards as if he had contracted any defilement or required any purification—Jesus lays his hand upon one who was "full of leprosy," and he says to him, "I will, be thou clean." We lose a little of the power and majesty of our Saviour's answer in our translation. Two words were spoken, (Θέλω, καθάρισσῃτε,) the answer, the echo to the prayer; two of the very words the man had used taken up and employed by Jesus in framing his prompt and gracious reply. No petition that was ever presented to Jesus met with a quicker, more complete, more satisfactory response. If our Lord's conduct in this instance was regulated by the principle which we know so often guided it in the treatment he gave to those who came to him to be cured, great must have been the faith which was met in such a way. The readiness which Jesus had displayed to exert his power may partly have been due to this being the first case of a leper's application to him, and to his desire to show that no legal barrier would be allowed by him to stand in the way of his stretching forth his hand to heal all that were diseased. Yet, the manner and the speech of the leper himself attest that he approached with no ordinary reverence, and petitioned with no ordinary faith. And, according to his faith, it was done unto him immediately. As soon as the words, "I will, be thou clean," had come from the Saviour's lips, "the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed."

Did any further colloquy take place between the healed and the Healer? When, quick as lightning, through the frame the sensation passed of an entirely recovered health—when he stood up before the Lord, not a sign or symptom of the banished leprosy on his person—

did no thanks burst from his grateful lips? or did our Lord say nothing to him about another healing which he was both willing and able to effect? We are not to infer that nothing of the kind occurred because nothing is recorded. The evangelists have preserved alone the fact that, whatever words may have passed between them, Jesus was in haste to send the leper away, and in doing so gave him strict command to tell no man, but to go instantly and show himself to the priest, and offer the gifts that Moses commanded—the five birds and the cedar wood, and the scarlet and the hyssop—the means and instruments by which the purification of one declared free of leprosy was to be effected, and, relieved from the ban that had been laid upon him, he was to be reinstated in the possession of all the common privileges of society and citizenship. It is quite possible that, knowing the opposition which was already kindling against him, of which we shall presently see traces, Jesus may have desired that, without throwing out any hint of what had occurred which might precede him by the way and prejudice the judge, this man should repair as quickly as possible to the priest upon whom it devolved judicially to declare that he, so recently a man full of leprosy, was now entirely free of the complaint. It would be a testimony they could not well gainsay, if the fact of the departure of the leprosy were attested by the acceptance of the offerer's gifts and his readmission into the congregation of Israel. To prevent any possibility of this ratification of the reality of the cure being refused, Jesus might have enjoined silence and as speedy a resort as possible to the priest; the silence in such circumstances and with such a view prescribed, to last only till the desired end was gained. It would seem, however, from the result, that a more immediate object of the Saviour in laying this injunction upon the leper was to prevent the influx of a still greater crowd than that which was already oppressing him, and thus the hampering of his movements, and the absorption of too much of his time in the mere work of healing. For straightway, though charged to keep silence, the man when he went from Jesus could not restrain himself, but “began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that great multitudes came together to be healed of their infirmities, and Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places, and withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.” Mark 1:45; Luke 5:15, 16.

Again, a second time, as it was after that busy Sabbath in Capernaum, and before his first journey through Galilee, so now, at the close of this circuit and under the pressure of the multitude that beset his path, Jesus is driven forth from the city's crowded haunts to seek

the solitary place, where for some hours at least he may enjoy unbroken communion with heaven. To watch how and when it was that he took refuge thus in prayer, mingling devotion with activity, the days of bustle with the hours of quiet, intercourse with man in fellowship with God, let this be one of our cherished employments, following the earthly footsteps of our Lord: for nothing is more fitted to impress upon us the lesson—how needful, how serviceable it is, if we would think and work rightly among or for others around us, that we be often alone with our Father which is in heaven. A life all action will be as bad for our own soul as a life all prayer would be profitless for others. It is the right and happy blending, each in its due proportion, of stillness and of action, of work and prayer, which promotes true spiritual health and growth; and the weaker we are—the more easily at once distracted and absorbed by much bustling activity—so much the more of reflection, retirement, and devotion is needed to temper our spirit aright, and to keep it in harmony with that of our Lord and Master.

It is as impossible to tell how long a time it took to make the first round of the Galilean towns and villages, as it is to define the line or circle along which Jesus moved. One high authority\* concludes that it must have occupied between two and three months: another,† that it did not occupy more than four or five days. A period of intermediate length would probably be nearer the truth than either. On completing the circuit he returned to Capernaum, to take up his abode again in Peter's house. No rest was given him. The news of his return passed rapidly through the town, and straightway so many were gathered together "that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door." We must remember here, in order to understand what followed, the form of a Jewish house, and the materials of which its roof was ordinarily composed. There is not now, and there never seems to have been, much variety in the shape of Syrian dwelling-houses. Externally they all present the one dull uniform appearance of so many cubes or squares, seldom more than one story high—the outer walls showing no windows, nor any opening on the level of the ground except the door. On entering you pass through a lesser court, into which alone strangers are admitted, and then into the inner uncovered square into which the different apartments of the building open. In one corner, either of the outer or inner court—generally in the latter—there is a flight of steps conducting to the roof, a place of frequent resort at all times, and in the hotter months of summer turned into the sleeping-place of the

\* Greswell.

† Ellicott.



household. The larger houses, in which the wealthier inhabitants reside, are all separate from one another. The lesser are often without any open courtyard, and built close together, so that you could pass readily from roof to roof. These roofs, always flat, are formed of bricks or tiles, or more generally of a compost of mud and straw, which a day's such rain as we often have would entirely demolish. Whatever the size of the houses be, or however they be situated relatively to each other, in one way or other, either by a staircase within the court—open, of course, only to the family to which the house belongs—or by a flight of steps without—which, when the houses are contiguous, may serve many households as a common means of access—the roof of each dwelling is easily reached. We do not need to settle what size the dwelling was in Capernaum where Jesus took up his abode; we have only to imagine it to be of the usual and invariable Syrian type, to render the narrative intelligible.

— A crowd assembles and fills the room of the house in which Jesus sits and teaches. At first this crowd is not so dense but that a single individual may pass through it, and in this way one and another of the diseased did press through, and the power of the Lord was there to heal them. But the crowd grew and thickened, it overflowed the room, it filled the street before the door, till every spot within reach of Christ's voice was occupied, and still there were new-comers pressing in to try and catch a word; and to the work of healing within an effectual stop seems now to have been put. At this stage four men appear, bearing a sick man on a litter. They reach the crowd, they try to enter, they entreat, they expostulate; the thing is hopeless, that four men with such a burden ever shall get through. Is the project to be given up, the great chance lost? The bearers consult the man they carry. He is paralytic, cannot move a limb, can do nothing for himself. But he is in full possession of his faculties; the spirit is entire within. It was his eagerness to be healed, still more than their readiness to help him, that had led these four men to lift him and carry him so far, and they are ready still to do any thing—any thing they can. Some one suggests—who so likely as the paralytic himself?—that they might get upon the roof, lift up so much of it as was required, and let down before Christ the bed on which the patient lay; a singular, an extreme step to take, yet one to which men who were resolved to do any thing rather than lose the opportunity, might not refuse to have recourse.

They all were strong in the belief that if only they could get at Jesus the cure would be effected, but the paralytic himself had an eager craving to get into the Saviour's presence, deeper than that

springing from the desire to have his bodily ailment removed. The stroke that had taken the strength out of his body had quickened conscience. He had recognized it as coming from the hand of God; it had awakened within him a sense of his great and manifold bygone transgressions. His sins had taken hold of him, and the burden was too heavy for him to bear. He hears of Jesus that he had announced himself as the healer of the broken-hearted; that there is a gospel, good tidings that he proclaims to the poor in spirit. If ever a heart needed healing, a spirit needed comforting, it is his. And now, shall he be so near to him whom he has been so anxious to see, and yet have to go away disappointed, unrelieved? He either himself suggests, or when suggested, he warmly approves, the project of trying to let him down through the roof. The bearers second his desires. They make the effort—they succeed: noiselessly they lift the tiles—gently they let down the bed, and before Jesus, as he is speaking, the bed and its burden lie.

But now, before noticing how Jesus met this interruption of his discourse, and dealt with the man who was so curiously obtruded on his notice, let us look around a moment on the strangely constituted audience which Christ at this moment is addressing. Close beside him are his disciples—around him are many simple-minded, simple-hearted men, drinking in with wonder words they scarce half understand. But they are not all friendly listeners who are there, for there are “Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by,” some from Galilee, some from Judea, some even from Jerusalem. The last—what has brought them here? They come as spies—they come as emissaries from the men who reproved Jesus at Jerusalem for his healing of another paralytic at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath-day, and who sought to slay him, “because he had not only broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.” Already these Pharisees counted Jesus a blasphemer, whose life they were seeking but the fit ground and occasion to cut off. And here are some of their number wearing the mask, waiting and watching, little knowing all the while that an eye is on them which follows every turn of their thoughts, and sees into all the secret places of their hearts. It is as one who thus thoroughly knew them, and would with his own hand throw a fresh stone of stumbling before their feet—as one who thoroughly knew also the poor, helpless, palsied penitent who lies on the bed before him, that Jesus now speaks and acts. Meeting those pleading eyes that are fixed so importunately upon him, without making any inquiries or waiting to have any petition presented, “Son,” he says to the sick of the palsy, “be

of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." He would not have addressed him thus had he not known how greatly he needed to be cheered, how gladly he would welcome the pardon, in what a suitable condition he was to have that pardon bestowed. Let us believe then that, spoken with nicest adaptation to the man's state and wants, Christ's words were with power—that as quickly and as thoroughly as the words, "I will, be thou clean," banished the leprosy from the one man's body, as quickly and as thoroughly these words banished the gloom and despondency from this man's soul. Thus spoken to by one in whom he had full confidence, he was of good cheer, and did assuredly believe that his sins had been forgiven him. If it was so—if his faith in Jesus as his soul's deliverer was as simple and as strong as, from the way in which Christ spoke, we presume it was—then too happy would he be at the moment when the blessedness of him whose sins are forgiven, whose iniquity is covered, filled his heart, to think of any thing beside. He is silent at least, he is satisfied; he makes no remonstrance, he proffers no request. There is nothing going on within his breast that Jesus needs to drag forth to light, to detect and to rebuke. Not so with the scribes and Pharisees, upon whom those words of Jesus have had a quite startling effect. They too are silent; nor, beyond the glances of wonder, horror, hate, that they hastily and furtively exchange, do they give any outward sign of what is passing in their hearts. But Jesus knows it all. They had been saying within themselves, "This man blasphemeth;" they had been reasoning in their hearts, to their own entire satisfaction and to Christ's utter condemnation, saying, "Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?" Notwithstanding all their self-assurance, they must have been a little startled when, the thoughts of their hearts revealed, Jesus said to them, "Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?" He does not ask which was easier, to forgive sins or to cure a palsy, but which was easier, to say the one or to say the other, for he knew that they had been secretly thinking how easy it was for any man to say to another, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," but how impossible it was for him to make good such a saying. "But that ye may know," he added, "that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thy house." The man arose and departed to his own house—healed in body, healed in spirit—glorifying God. The people saw it and were amazed, and were filled with awe; and they said to one another, "We never

saw it in this fashion—we have seen strange things to-day.” And “they glorified God which had given such power to men.” The scribes and Pharisees saw it, and had palpable evidence of the superhuman knowledge and superhuman power of Christ given to them—had a miracle wrought before their eyes in proof of Christ’s possession of a prerogative which they were right in thinking belonged to God only, but they would not let any thing convince them that the Son of man had power on earth to forgive sins; and it was not long, as we shall see, ere new stumbling-blocks were thrown in their way, over which they fell.

Our Saviour, in bodily presence, has now passed away from us. He can touch us no more with his living finger; he banishes no more our bodily diseases with a word; but the leprosy of the heart—the spreading, pervading taints of ungodliness, selfishness, malignity, impurity—these it is his office still to cure; these it is our duty still to carry to him to have removed; and if we go in the spirit of him who said, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean,” the cleansing virtue will not be withheld.

The Son of man had power on earth to forgive sins; he exercised that power; he absolved at once the penitent of Capernaum from all his sins; he caused that man to taste the joy of an immediate, gracious, free, and full forgiveness. What is to hinder our receiving the same benefit—enjoying the same blessing? Has the Son of man lost any of his power to forgive sins by his being no more upon this earth, his having passed into the heavens? Is pardon a boon that he no longer dispenses, that he holds now suspended over our heads—a thing to be hoped for but never to be had? No, let us believe that his mission on earth has not so failed in its great object; that he is as willing as he is able to say and do for each of us what he said and did for the palsied man in Peter’s house at Capernaum; that he waits but to see us penitent and broken-hearted, looking to and trusting in him, to say in turn to each of us, “Son—Daughter—be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.”



## II.

## THE CHARGE OF SABBATH-BREAKING.\*

It was a common saying among the Jews, that whoever did any work on the Sabbath-day denied the work of the creation. The saying was grounded on the fact that one principal end of the Sabbatic institute was, by its continued and faithful observance, to preserve a knowledge of, and a faith in, the one living and true God as the Creator of all things. As being a most explicit and expressive embodiment in outward act and habit of the faith of the Jewish people, that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and the sea and all that in them is, it was chosen by God as a fit and appropriate sign of the peculiar relationship towards him into which that people had been brought—the peculiar standing which among other nations it was to occupy. “Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched-out arm: therefore, the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath-day.” Deut. 5:13–15. “Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever.” Exod. 31:16, 17. “Moreover also I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them. Hallow my Sabbaths; that ye may know that I am the Lord your God.” Ezek. 20:12, 20.

There was no rite, nor institution, not even circumcision, by which the Jews were more conspicuously distinguished from surrounding nations, and marked off as the worshippers of Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth. Their Sabbath-keeping was a perpetual and visible token of the connection in which they stood to God, and of the great mission which, under him, they were set apart to discharge. But how was the Sabbath to be kept so as to serve this end? Looking back here to the original statutes, and to the earlier practice of the Jewish people, you will find that there was but one

\* Mark 1:1–31; John 5:1–47; 9:14; Matt. 12:1–14; Luke 13:10–17; 14:1–6.

positive injunction given; the cessation from all manner of work. The rest enjoined, however, could not be the rest of total and absolute inactivity. The work from which they were to cease could not be every doing of the human hand. Obviously it was the work of men's ordinary occupation or trade, the work by which the hours of common labor were filled by those engaged therein. There is, indeed, one prohibition, the only one, in which there is a specification of the kind of work to be desisted from, which would seem to point to a narrower interpretation of the original command. When Moses had gathered all the congregation of Israel together at the base of Sinai, and the people were about to enter on the construction of the ark and the tabernacle, knowing with what hearty enthusiasm they were inspired, he prefaced his instructions as to the manner in which they should carry on the work, by saying, "Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you a holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the Lord; ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitation on the Sabbath-day." They did not need to be told to kindle no fire for any ordinary culinary purposes. A double portion of the manna fell upon the day preceding the Sabbath, and they were to seethe and bake the whole of it, so that no preparation of food on the Sabbath was required. Issued under such peculiar circumstances, it seems not unreasonable to believe that the particular object of the Mosaic injunction was to check the ardor of those who might otherwise have been tempted to carry on the mouldings and the castings in gold and silver on the Sabbath as on other days: not that the Jews of all after generations were prohibited by divine command from having a fire burning in their dwellings, for whatever purpose kindled, on the Sabbath-day.

When we turn from what was prohibited to what was enjoined we find a blank. One or two specific injunctions were indeed laid upon the priests. The daily sacrifices were to be doubled, and the show-bread baked upon the Sabbath was to be renewed. That there was no sabbatism in the temple became in this way a proverb. But for the people at large there were no minute instructions as to how the day was to be spent. It could not have been made imperative on them to assemble for public worship on that day, for during the times of the Jewish theocracy there was no place but one—the temple—for such worship, and the meeting there each seventh day was impossible. It was not till after the captivity that synagogues were erected all over the land, in which weekly assemblages for worship did take place; but that was done, not in obedience to any divine command. It would seem, indeed, to have been the practice of the

Jews, from the beginning, to gather round their prophets on the Sabbath-days, and to avail themselves of such means of religious instruction as they could command. Parents took advantage of the rest to teach the law unto their children. But there were no peculiar religious observances prescribed. The day was spent in rest, in thankfulness, in gladness: spent to a great extent as the festival days of other countries were spent. Dressed in their best attire, indulging in better fare, it was to feasting rather than to fasting that the Sabbath was devoted. But, as the faith of the people grew weak, and their allegiance to their divine Sovereign faltered, they grew neglectful of the Sabbath, and began to profane the day by breaking in upon that rest from all the ordinary occupations of life, which should have been observed. Thus it was that, among other distinctive marks of their peculiarity as a consecrated people, the only worshippers of the great Creator, this one became obscured and well-nigh obliterated. In the latest years of the Hebrew commonwealth prophet after prophet was raised up to testify against those defections from the faith, among which that of neglecting and profaning the Sabbath occupied a conspicuous place. After the captivity, on the restoration of the Jews to their own land, the same lax habits prevailed. "In those days," says Nehemiah, "saw I in Judah some treading wine-presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath-day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals." Neh. 13:15. Nehemiah did more than testify. Alert and decisive in all his movements, he had the gates of Jerusalem shut when it began to be dark before the Sabbath, and kept them shut till the Sabbath was over. It is in the light of his sayings and doings that we are to interpret the utterance from the lips of Jeremiah: "Thus saith the Lord: Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath-day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath-day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the Sabbath-day, as I commanded your fathers." Jer. 17:21.

A singular change came over the spirit and habits of the Jewish people after the restoration from the Babylonian captivity. Previously, in the days of the kings and prophets, they were ever and anon showing a tendency to idolatry; subsequently no such tendency appears. Previously they had been neglectful of many of the distinctive rites and ceremonies of their faith; subsequently they became strict and punctilious in their observance of them. Great national calamities—the persecution under the successors of Alexander the

Great, the wars of the Maccabees, the aggression of the Romans, the ascent into power of the Idumean family of the Herods, the establishment of the schools of the Rabbis—all conspired to intensify the national pride and religious bigotry of the Jews; who, as they had nothing but the old laws and traditions to cling to, clung to them with all the more tenacious grasp. The sect of the Pharisees arose, and carried the popular sympathy along with it. Every thing regarded as purely and peculiarly Judaic was exaggerated. Punctilious observance of the old ritual was the one great merit compensating for all defects; while around the simpler statute-law of Moses there arose an oral or traditional law, growing continually in bulk and overshadowing the primitive Mosaic institute. It had been a less evil had the original enactments of that institute continued to be rightly and liberally interpreted. Instead of this, the narrowest and most rigid interpretation was the only one allowed; and upon each statute as so interpreted additions and explanations were heaped of such a character as to turn more and more the keeping of them into a mere matter of external routine and outward performance. So fared it with the old, broad, and benignant law as to the Sabbath. Its primary injunction, "Thou shalt do no manner of work," was falsely held as aimed at all kinds of work whatever; no less than thirty-nine kinds or classes of work being specified as involved in the prohibition. It was ruled thus that grass should not be trodden on the Sabbath, for the bruising of it was a species of harvest-work; that shoes with nails should not be worn, as that was the carrying a burden. To what absurd excesses such a spirit of interpretation led may be gathered from the single instance of its being actually laid down in the Mishna that a tailor must not go out with his needle near dusk on the eve of the Sabbath, lest he should forget, and carry it with him on the Sabbath. In all this there was not only a wrong rendering of the Mosaic precept, but beyond, and much worse than that, there was the erection of a false standard of duty, a false test of piety—the elevation of the outward, the positive, the ceremonial over the inward, the moral, the spiritual; the putting of the letter that killeth above the spirit which maketh alive.

— Now let us see how, born and brought up among a people filled with such prejudices, Jesus regulated his conduct. He knew that healing the diseased on the Sabbath-day would be regarded as a breach of the divine law, would shock the Pharisees, and run counter to the convictions of the great mass of the community. Did he abstain from effecting cures upon that day? He might easily have done so, as no applications were made to him. Much as they desired



to have the benefit conferred, the people shrank from bringing their diseased to be cured on the holy day. Jesus had only to meet their prejudices by doing nothing. But he did not choose to be thus silent and acquiescent. No less than seven miracles are recorded as wrought by him on the Sabbath-day, some of them among the most conspicuous and memorable in his ministry. 1. The cure of the paralytic on the occasion of his second visit to Jerusalem. 2. The cure of the demoniac in the synagogue of Capernaum, when opening his ministry in Galilee. 3. The cure of Peter's wife's mother the same afternoon in the same city. 4. The cure of the man with a withered hand, a few Sabbaths afterwards, in the same city. 5. The cure of the man born blind, who sat begging in the porch of the temple at Jerusalem. 6. The cure of a woman who had the spirit of infirmity for eighteen years. 7. The cure of the man with a dropsy, who happened to be present at a feast given on a Sabbath-day in the house of a chief publican, an invitation to which Jesus had accepted. Not one of these was effected in answer to any application made. They were all spontaneous, done of Christ's own free will and motion. Nor was there, in regard to most of them, any urgency requiring that the healing should have been done that day, if done at all. Jesus might have chosen another day rather than the Sabbath to walk through the crowded porches of Bethesda. The impotent man had lain too long there to make a day earlier or a day later of much moment to him. It was the same with the blind beggar of Jerusalem; and these were the two instances of cures upon the Sabbath-day which drew most public notice, and were attended with the most important results. But Jesus was not content with simply relieving the sufferers on these occasions. He did himself, or he bade his patients do, what he was well aware would attract the eye and draw down upon it the condemnation of the priesthood. How easy had it been for him at Bethesda to have cured the man in passing, and told him to lie quietly there till the next day, so that no one should have known any thing of the cure. But he told him to take up his bed and carry it through the streets, obtruding thus on the eye of the spectators an act which seemed to be an open and flagrant breach of the command delivered by Jeremiah, "Thus saith the Lord: Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath-day." Jer. 17:21. In curing the man born blind, he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and anointed the eyes of the man with the ointment, and said unto him, "Go wash in the pool of Siloam;" both which acts, the making and applying of the ointment and the washing in the sacred fountain, were deemed to be desecrations of the Sabbath: It

thus appears that he not only voluntarily selected the Sabbath as the day for performing the cures, but wrought them in such a way, or accompanied with such directions, as forced them into notice, and involved others as well as himself in what was considered a crime of the deepest dye—involving in fact the penalty of death.

The paralytic of the porches and the blind beggar of the wayside could both indeed plead in their justification the command of their healer, and Jesus took upon himself the full responsibility of their acts. In meeting the first challenge of his conduct as a Sabbath-breaker, Christ was content, as appears from the narrative in the fifth chapter of St. John's gospel, to rest his defence on his Sonship to the Father—a sonship that might seem to entitle him to claim and exercise a liberty of action to which no other might legitimately aspire. But, putting that sonship aside, had Christ's act in healing, and the man's act in carrying his bed, been violations of the Sabbath law? This question was left unsettled by our Lord's first defence of himself against the accusation of the Pharisees. It served to bring the matter out, not in a case resting on Christ's peculiar character, position, and rights, but in one involving simply the true interpretation of the existing law, when it was an act of the disciples on which the charge of Sabbath-breaking was founded. One Sabbath-day he and his disciples were walking through some cornfields in which the grain was already white unto the harvest. The disciples being a hungered, began to pluck the ears of corn, to rub them in their hands, and eat. In doing so, there was no violation by them, as there would be with us, of the rights of property. The old Jewish law ran thus:—"When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbor, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thy hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbor's standing corn." Dent. 23:25. The law and practice of Palestine continue to be this day what they were so many thousand years ago. We travelled in that country once in spring. Our course lay through it before the ears of corn were full, but nothing surprised us more than the liberties which our guides took in riding through the fields and letting their horses eat as much of the standing corn as they pleased. We felt at first as if we were trespassers and thieves, but were relieved by finding that it was done under the eye and with the full consent of the owners of the crops. There was nothing wrong, then, in what the disciples of Jesus did. But it was done upon the Sabbath-day, which was thought to be unlawful. And there were men who were watching—dogging the steps of Jesus and his disciples, perhaps to see whether in their walk they would exceed the distance to which a Sabbath-day's journey had

been restricted. So soon as those lynx-eyed men observe what the disciples were doing, they inform the Pharisees, who go to Jesus and say, "Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath-day." They were only expressing the popular belief which they had helped to form. It had come to be generally believed that plucking and rubbing in the hand ears of corn was work that the Sabbath law condemned. Jesus threw a shield of defence over the act of his disciples by referring to the conduct of David, esteemed to be a model of Jewish piety. Once when he and his men were a hungered, he had not scrupled to break the rules, to violate the sanctity of the holy place. We may believe that it was on a Sabbath-day he did so. Doubly appropriate, therefore, was the reference to it; but it was not essential to Christ's argument that the act was done upon the Sabbath-day. What Christ mainly desired by his allusion to the case of David, was to establish the principle that the pressure of hunger vindicated the setting aside for the time of the strictest even of the temple regulations. But these regulations, and the whole temple service which they sustained, were held to be of such superior importance to the Sabbatic law, that when both could not be kept, the latter had to give way. A vast amount of what elsewhere would have been accounted as Sabbath-breaking went on every Sabbath-day in the temple. If the temple, then, carried it over the Sabbath, and hunger carried it over the temple, as free of fault as David and his men were, so free of fault were Christ's disciples. To whatever their hunger was due, it had come upon them owing to their connection with him; and if in Jerusalem the temple towered above the Sabbath and threw its protection over its servants engaged in its work, here in the fields of Galilee was one greater than the temple, throwing his protection over his disciples as they followed him. They, too, must be acquitted.

But it is not enough that the act of his disciples be in this way vindicated. Our Lord seizes the opportunity to let the Pharisees know that they had mistaken the spirit and object of the ceremonial law, and particularly of the Sabbatic institute. "But if ye had known," he added, "what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless." Jesus quotes here from the book of Hosea (chap. 6:6) a saying which more than once he repeated. It was not a solitary one. Much to the same effect were the words which the first of the prophets addressed to the first of the kings: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." 1 Sam.

15:22. The wisest of the kings responds to the words of Samuel by the proverb, "To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice." Prov. 21:3. Isaiah and Jeremiah record words of the same import from Jehovah's lips: "I delight not, saith the Lord, in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well." "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices; but this thing commanded I them, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people; and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you." Isa. 1:11, 16, 17; Jer. 7:21-23. There is something singularly impressive in hearing such emphatic testimonies to the comparative worthlessness of sacrifices and offerings, and all merely ritualistic observances, issuing from the heart of the old Jewish economy; spoken at the very time when all those statutes and ordinances of the Lord were in full force, that define so minutely and prescribe so peremptorily the formalities of Jewish worship.

Jesus, in quoting one of these testimonies, and applying it to the case of his disciples' conduct, puts Sabbath-keeping, so far as it consisted merely in abstaining from this or that kind of work, in the same category as sacrifice, regarding it as part of that formal and external mode of honoring and serving the Supreme which ought never to stand in the way of any work of need or of benevolence. Had the Pharisees but listened to the voice of their own prophets, they would have understood this; but, deaf to that voice, they had drawn tighter and tighter the bonds of the required Sabbatic service, ever narrowing the field of what was allowable on the seventh day, till they had laid a yoke upon men's shoulders too heavy for them to bear. From this yoke, at all hazards to himself, Jesus will relieve his countrymen, proclaiming in their ears the great and pregnant truth, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." The Sabbath is but a means to an end; that end is man's present comfort, his spiritual and eternal good. Wherever, therefore, the keeping of the Sabbath in the way prescribed, instead of promoting, would frustrate that end, it was more honored in the breach than in the observance. It was never to be regarded as in itself an end. Apart from the physical, social, moral, and religious benefits to be thereby realized, there was no merit in painfully doing this one thing, or rigorously abstaining from that other. The Sabbath was made to serve man; but man was not made to serve or to be a slave to the Sabbath. And just



because it was an institution which, when rightly used, is so eminently fitted to minister to man's present and eternal good, the Son of man, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, as Head of our humanity, to render to it the greatest of all services, and to take all other servants of it under his care and keeping, would show himself to be Lord also of the Sabbath.

It was in this character that Jesus acted on the Sabbath which so closely followed the incident of the walk in the cornfields. In some unnamed synagogue he sat and taught. A man whose right hand was withered stood before him. Had he been brought there to serve the purposes of these watchful enemies who wished, not simply to have his own acts to bring up against him, (for these, as the acts of a prophet, might be regarded as privileged,) but to get from him a distinct categorical reply to the question whether it was lawful for any man who had the power of healing to exert it on the Sabbath-day? So soon at least as they saw his eye fastened upon the man with the withered hand, and before he did any thing, they interpose their question, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-days?" The question is met by an appeal to their own practice: "What man shall there be among you that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath-day, will he not lay hold on it and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep! Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath-days." But they shall not only have its lawfulness asserted, they shall see the good done before their eyes. Jesus bids the man with the withered hand stand forth. But ere he cures him, he turns to the scribes and Pharisees and puts in his turn a question cutting deep into their deceitful hearts: "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath-days,"—as I am doing—"or to do evil?"—as ye do in suspecting and maligning me;—"to save life,"—as I do—"or to kill,"—as ye are doing who are already meditating my death? There is no answer to this question. They stand speechless before him, but unconvinced and unrelenting.

"And Jesus looked round about on them with anger." The meek and the gentle and the patient one! What was it that filled his breast with such a glow of indignation, that it broke out in this unwonted look of anger? It was the sight of men, who, laying hold of one of his Father's most merciful institutes—that which for man and beast, and the whole laboring creation, provided a day of returning rest, amid whose quiet the reflecting spirit of man might rise to the contemplation of its higher ends and its eternal destiny—instead of looking at the primary command to keep holy each seventh day, as it stood enshrined among those precepts which enjoined a supreme

love to God and a corresponding love to man, and allowing this one positive and external institute to receive its interpretation from those immutable moral laws among which it was interposed, had exalted it into a place of isolation and false importance, attaching a specific virtue to the bare outward keeping of the letter, magnifying to the uttermost the minutest acts of bodily service; finding therein the materials which the spirit of self-righteousness employed for its own low and sordid purposes, an instrument which it would have used for defrauding the poor and the needy and the diseased of that help which the hand of charity was ready to render—such was the source of that anger with which Jesus looked round about on the scribes and Pharisees.

But soon his eye, full of the expression of anger as it rests on them, becomes as full of pity as it rests on the man who still stands expectant before him. Jesus says to him, "Stretch forth thy hand." One can fancy the man replying, "Which hand is it that you bid me thus stretch forth? Is it this one that hangs lifeless by my side? Oh, if I but saw its wrinkled flesh filled up, did I but feel restored the power that once was in it, most gladly would I do your bidding; but mock me not by telling me to stretch forth a hand from which you see, and I feel, all power is gone." Had the man thought so, spoken so, felt so, he might have carried his withered hand with him to the grave. But he did not so think, or feel, or act. He is spoken to by one of whom he believes that he can give the strength to execute the command he issues. It is in that faith he acts, and, paradoxical as it may seem, let us say, that if in that faith he had not made the effort, he never would have got the strength; and yet if he had not got the strength, he never could have made the effort. And is it not thus that the divine Redeemer still addresses us? Stretch forth thy withered heart to love—thy withered hand to serve—such is his command. Fixing an eye of faith on him, who has already fixed his eye of love on us, let us make the effort, and in the very making of the effort we shall get the strength.

## III.

## THE CALLING TO THE APOSTOLATE OF ST. PETER, ST. ANDREW, ST. JAMES, ST. JOHN, AND ST. MATTHEW.\*

EXTRAORDINARY success naturally excites exaggerated hopes. A sudden blaze of prosperity has blinded the strongest human eye. Nor can you point to any great enterprise, signally successful at its outset, of which you will not find it true that those engaged in it were, for a short time at least, seduced into exorbitant expectations. If ever any success might have operated in this way, it was that which attended the close of the first year of our Lord's ministry. The whole population of Galilee, a community of from two to three millions, stirred to its depths—the excitement spreading all around, reaching eastward beyond the Jordan, westward to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, southward to the hill country of Judea. It is no longer, as in the days that followed the baptism by the banks of the Jordan, an obscure Nazarene travelling with a few friends who had attached themselves to his person; it is the great Worker of miracles, the Healer of all diseases, the Caster-out of devils, surrounded and pressed in upon so closely by admiring and enthusiastic crowds, that to get a few quiet hours he had to steal them from sleep—to spend them in the mountain solitudes. It is no longer in the synagogue and on the Sabbath-days alone that audiences are to be found; everywhere and at all times assemblages, often too large for his addressing them, are ready to hang upon his lips. But you search in vain through all the wonderful excitement and popularity which followed our Lord in his first circuit through Galilee, for the slightest evidence that any false or exaggerated expectations were cherished. The specious appearances that then surrounded Him never dazzled nor deceived his eye. He knew from the beginning how soon the sudden fervors of the first great commotion would subside—how soon the tide that swelled so high would ebb away. He knew that had he left to themselves those among whom he lived and labored, had he done nothing to bind some of them to himself by ties closer and stronger than any they spontaneously would have formed, he would at the close have been left alone. And therefore it was that at the very time when his popularity was at the highest, he took the first step towards binding to himself twelve chosen men in links which,

\* Luke 5:1-11; Matt. 4:18-22; 9:9-17; Mark 1:16-20; 2:14-22; Luke 5:27-39.

besides all the pains that he took himself to forge and fasten them, needed the welding forces of the day of Pentecost to make them strong enough to bind them everlastingly to him.

To these twelve men, an office, secondary only to the one he himself discharged, was to be assigned. They were always to be with him, the spectators and reporters of all he said and did and suffered. They were to share and multiply his labors, to protect and relieve him from the pressure to which he was exposed. For a short season he was to send them from his side, to teach and to work miracles as he did himself, that a short fore-trial might be made of the work in which they were afterwards to be engaged. After his death they were to be the witnesses of the Resurrection, the expounders of that gospel which needed the great decease to be accomplished ere in its full measure it could be proclaimed. By their hands the foundations of the church were to be laid. Let us note, then, the first steps in their calling to this high office.

On his return from the Temptation, by the banks of the Jordan, and on their way thence to Galilee, five men—Andrew, John, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael—had temporarily attached themselves to Jesus. Of these, only one—Philip—had been called by our Lord himself to follow him. The others were attracted by what they heard about him or saw in him. At first, however, it was but a loose and uncertain bond that united them to Jesus. All the five were present, we may believe, at the marriage feast at Cana, and may have gone up with him to Jerusalem, to the first Passover which he attended after his baptism. But they did not remain in constant attendance upon his person. After his first circuit of Galilee, when his fame was at its height, three of them had returned to their ordinary occupation as fishermen. With them a fourth became associated. As Andrew had brought his brother Peter to Jesus, we may imagine that the same service had been rendered by John to his brother James; so that all the four were already well known to Christ, had enjoyed much familiar intercourse with him, and had appeared often openly as his followers. Perhaps it was the common bond of discipleship to him which in the course of the year had drawn them into closer union with one another. Peter and Andrew had previously resided at Bethsaida, a town at the northeastern extremity of the lake, but they had now removed to Capernaum, had entered into partnership with the two sons of Zebedee, and had been plying their craft together on the lake, when all the four were pointedly and specially summoned in a way they never before had been to follow the Lord.

The difficulties that many have felt in harmonizing the narratives



in the fourth chapter of St. Matthew and first chapter of St. Mark with that in the fifth chapter of St. Luke, have led them to believe that two such summonses were given; that on the first occasion—the one referred to by the two former—the four had answered the appeal by an immediate throwing up of their occupation by the lake side, but that they had again, and not long afterwards, resumed it, requiring a still more impressive instrumentality finally to sever the bonds. We are inclined rather to believe that all which the three evangelists relate occurred in the course of the same morning, and that it happened somewhat in this manner:

The day had dawned. From his solitary place of rest and prayer, somewhere among the neighboring hills, Jesus had come down to the quiet beach as the first light of the morning struck across the placid bosom of the lake. The unproductive toil of the night was nearly over for the fishermen. Out a little distance upon the waters, Peter and Andrew had cast in their net for the last time as Jesus approached the shore. But his progress was interrupted by the crowds hurrying out of Capernaum, so soon as it was known that he was there. Through these crowds—stopping occasionally to address a few words to them—Jesus made his way to one or other of those small creeks or inlets still to be seen there, where a boat could ride a few feet from the shore, and the people, seated on either side and before the speaker, could listen quietly to one addressing them from the boat. Here in this creek two boats were drawn up, the property of the four—the two pairs of brothers already spoken of. The fishermen had gone out of them, and were mending their nets; not so far away, however, but that one of them, Peter, noticing the Lord's approach, had returned. Entering into his boat, Jesus asked Peter to thrust out a little from the land; and when this was done, he sat down and taught the people out of the boat. The teaching over, Jesus turned to Peter, and said to him, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught"—a singular command to come from one who knew so little—might be supposed to care so little—about the fisherman's craft. Still it came so decidedly from one whom Peter had already learned to address as Master, that, with a few words of explanation, indicative of the smallness of his hope, he prepares to comply with it. "Master," he says, "we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net." He calls his brother, and launches out—lets down the net. At once such a multitude of fishes is enclosed that the boat begins to fill, the net to break. Excited by what they had seen, James and John had by this time launched their boat, and Peter beckons them

to come and help. They come, but all the help they can give is scarce sufficient. Both boats are filled, and almost sinking as they get ashore.

Peter had already seen Jesus do wonderful things—turn water into wine, eject the devil from the demoniac, raise his own wife's mother from the fever-bed; but somehow this wonder came home to him as none of them had done—wrought in his own vessel, with his own net, in the way of his own calling, after his own fruitless toil. Never had the impression of a divine Power at work in his immediate presence taken such a hold of him. Never had the sense of his being in close contact with One in whom such power resided come so upon his spirit. Astonishment, fear, humiliation—the impression, not of his weakness only, but of his sinfulness—of his unworthiness to stand in such a presence—fill and overwhelm his open, ardent, impressible spirit. He falls at Jesus' knees, as he sat there in the boat, quietly watching all the stir and bustle of the fishermen; and he gives vent to the feeling that for a moment is uppermost, as he exclaims, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" And ever still, when the first clear and overpowering revelation is made to any man of an Almighty Being compassing his path, besetting him before and behind, laying his hand upon him—ever when the first true and real contact takes place of the human spirit with the living God as the Being with whom we have so closely and constantly to do, will something like the same effect be realized. So it was with him who said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." So it was with him who said, "Woe is me! for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

"Depart from me." Nothing could have surprised Peter more than the Lord's taking him at his word—then and for ever after turning his back upon him. No man then living would have felt such a forsaking more. Wishing to express how unfit he felt himself for such a presence, Peter, with his wonted rashness, had said more than he really meant. He asks Christ to go, yet he clings to him. "I am a sinful man, O Lord." Jesus knows that better than Peter does. Peter will know it better when the Lord looks at him in the judgment-hall, and he goes out to weep over his denials. But Jesus knows, also, that it is because he is so sinful a man he must not be forsaken. And though he is so sinful a man, yet still he may be chosen to stand in closest relationship to his Master. "Fear not," said Jesus to him: "from henceforth thou shalt catch men."

The words of direction, assurance, promise, addressed in the first instance to Peter alone, were soon repeated to his three associates. The shore was reached, the boats hauled up, the fish disposed of, James and John had carried the broken nets away to a little distance to mend them, when first to the one pair of brothers, and then to the other, Jesus said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." And immediately they left boats and nets, and two of them their father, and forsook all, and followed him. We may think it was not much that they had to leave, but it was their all; and the promptness and entireness of their relinquishment of it shows what power over them the Saviour had already got—what a readiness for service and for sacrifice was already in them. And these were the four men who ever after stood most closely associated with Jesus—the four who stand at the head of every list of the twelve apostles.

It was not indeed till some time after this that along with the other eight, they were set apart to the peculiar office of the apostolate. This calling of them away from their former avocations, this attaching of them permanently to his person, was a marked step toward their instalment in that position. It was the same with Matthew, the publican. The high road from Damascus southward to Judea and Egypt ran from the slopes of Mount Hermon down to the northern extremity of the sea of Galilee, and for a short distance skirted along the northwestern shore of the lake, passing through Capernaum. On the side of this road, close to the lake, stood the booth in which Matthew sat levying the toll on the passengers and their goods. He was one of a hated and degraded class. The payment of the taxes exacted by the foreigners under whose rule they were, irritated to the last degree the Jews, who regarded it as a visible sign and token of their bondage. The strong feeling thus excited spent itself on all who had any thing to do with the collection of these taxes. No Jew who desired to stand well with his fellow-countrymen would be a tax-gatherer. The office was commonly held by foreigners, or by those who cared but little for a purely Jewish reputation. Matthew was a Jew, yet he had become a publican, and now he is sitting at the receipt of custom as Jesus passed by. We know nothing of his personal character or previous habits. Considering that a year at least had passed since Jesus had first appeared as a public teacher in Galilee—that so prominent a part of his ministry had been conducted in the very neighborhood in which Matthew lived—it may be regarded as a violent supposition that there had been no previous acquaintance and intercourse between him and our Lord. It would be more in keeping with Christ's conduct in other instances to imag-

ine that, so far as his occupation had permitted, Matthew had already appeared as the follower of the new teacher, had shown himself to have been favorably affected towards him. However it was, Jesus saw in him a man who, under right teaching and training, would be well suited for the high office he intended to confer upon him; and so, despite of the invidious office he now held, Jesus stopped as he passed by—said, “Follow me;” and “he left all, rose up, and followed him,” throwing up thus a lucrative engagement, and casting in his lot with the small but growing band which Jesus was forming.

So soon as it was known that a publican had not only been seen in the following of Jesus—which might have occurred and occasioned no remark—but that Jesus had actually selected a publican and invited him to become one of his immediate attendants, a great commotion among the scribes and Pharisees arose. It was a public scandal, an offence against all propriety, that one pretending to be a religious guide of the people—one preaching the Kingdom of God—should call a publican to his side, and take him into his confidence. Bad enough that he should himself be seen breaking the Sabbath and encouraging his disciples to do so likewise; but to pass by all the respectable inhabitants of Capernaum—so many of whom were conspicuous for the strictness of their observance of all the Jewish ordinances—and to confer such a mark of favor upon a man with whom none of them would associate—what was to be thought of such an act? But the worst had not yet come. Either instantly upon his throwing up his office, or a few days thereafter, this Matthew makes a feast—a farewell one, it would seem—to which a number of his old friends and associates were invited, and there Jesus and his disciples were to be seen sitting among the other guests. The Pharisees could not stand this. They did not venture, indeed, to go and openly reproach Christ personally with it. They were smarting too keenly under the recent rebuke they had got from him to have courage to do so; but they go to his disciples, and they say to them, “Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?” Jesus does not leave it to the disciples to reply. As in so many other instances, he takes the matter into his own hands, and, half in irony, half in earnest, he says to them, “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that be sick.” They thought themselves the hale and healthy; they spake of these publicans and sinners as corrupt and diseased; why, then, blame him if he, as the great Physician, went where his services were most required? It was sinners, not the righteous, that he came to call to repentance. If they needed no repentance, why blame him if he went to call those whose ears were open to his entreaties? But were they, indeed, so



much better than those whom they despised? The difference between them was far more an outward, a ceremonial, than an inward, a moral, a spiritual one. Many of these poor publicans and sinners—excommunicated though they might be—very careless about religious rites—were men of simpler, truer, more honest natures, kindlier in their dispositions, and in a sense, too, more devout, than many of these pretentious pietists. “Go,” said Jesus to those who imagined themselves to be righteous and despised others—“Go, and learn what that meaneth: I will have mercy and not sacrifice”—mercy rather than sacrifice if the two be put in comparison; mercy alone, and no sacrifice, if the two are put in opposition—mercy among publicans and sinners rather than sacrifice or any amount of ceremonial observances among scribes and Pharisees.

— But now another class interferes, to make common cause with the Pharisees. Some of the disciples of John the Baptist had early seen the superiority of Jesus, and at their master’s own instance had enrolled themselves among his followers. But others stood aloof, having more in them of the old Judaic spirit—attracted as much by the ascetic habits of the Baptist as by any thing about him—recognizing in the fasts that he kept, the prayers that he himself offered and taught his disciples to offer, a return to a still purer and stricter piety than even that which the Pharisees practised. It was a strange and repulsive thing to such, at the very hour when their master was cast into prison and they were mourning and fasting more than usual on this account, to see Jesus and his disciples going about eating and drinking—nay, accepting invitations to festive entertainments in publicans’ houses. St. Matthew tells us that these disciples of John went at once to Jesus with their complaint. St. Mark completes the picture by informing us that the Pharisees joined in the complaint. Nothing more likely than that when the one saw how differently the discipleship of Jesus was developing itself from what they had expected, they should rather fall back upon the austerity of Pharisaism, with its frequent fastings and many prescribed exercises of devotion—nothing more natural than that the Pharisees should seize upon the occasion and ally themselves with the followers of the Baptist, to aim thereby a fresh blow at Christ’s authority and influence over the people. Christ’s answer meets both sets of complainers. “And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.” Matt. 9:15. In the last testimony that the Baptist had borne to Jesus had he not said, “He that hath the bride

is the bridegroom ; but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice." The position that John had thus claimed for himself, those disciples against whom the complaint was lodged were now occupying. They were the friends of the bridegroom—standing and hearing and rejoicing—was it a time for them to mourn and to fast? The days were to come when the bridegroom should be taken away from them, then should they fast—the fasting flowing spontaneously, unbidden, from the grief. There is no general command here prescribing fasting, but simply a prophecy, referring to a peculiar and brief period in the history of the Lord's disciples ; a prophecy, however, rich in the intimation it conveys that all external acts and exercises, such as that of fasting, should spring naturally out of some pure and deep emotion of the heart seeking for itself an appropriate expression.

And now two short parables are added by our Lord : the first we may regard as peculiarly applicable to the disciples of John, the other to the Pharisees. "No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse." Matt. 9:16. No man would take a piece of new raw cloth, which would not keep its form afterwards, which, when wet, would shrink, and sew it into the rent of an old garment ; for ere long, when the new piece put in contracted, it would tear itself away from the old, and the rent would be made worse. And let not the disciples of the Baptist think that this new piece of their master's asceticism, with its new fastings and new prayers, was to be sewed, as they seemed to wish to do, into the old, wornout, rent garment of Pharisaism. To try that would be to try to unite what could not lastingly be conjoined ; instead of closing up the rent, it would be to make it wider than ever. "Neither do men put new wine into old bottles ; else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish : but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved." Matt. 9:17. No man taketh old dry withered skin bottles, such as then were used, and filleth them with new wine ; for the new wine would ferment, expand, and the bottles be burst, and the wine spilled and lost. And let not the Pharisees think that the new wine of the kingdom, the fresh spirit of love to God and man, which Jesus came to breathe into regenerated humanity, could be safely poured into their old bottles—into those forms and ceremonies of worship, dry as dust, and brittle as the thinnest and most withered piece of leather. No, there must be new bottles for the new wine, bottles that will yield to the pres-

sure from within, and expand as the fermenting liquid which they contain expanded. And such new bottles as were thus required Jesus was finding—not in priestly men, chained up from childhood within priestly habits—not in those fixed and rigid Levitical institutions which the long years that had been draining them of their vitality had been stiffening into an immovable inflexibility: but in these fishermen, these publicans—natural, homely, unlearned men, open to imbibe his spirit in all its richness and expansiveness; and in those simple forms and institutions of Christianity, which, cramped by no formal and immutable injunctions, were to be left free to take such new outward shapes as the indwelling spirit might mould.

These two homely parables of our Lord, so specially adapted as they were to the circumstances in which they were uttered—the individuals to whom they were addressed—do they not carry with them a lesson to all times and ages of Christianity? Do they not remind us of the absolute incompatibility of the legal and the evangelical obedience—the spirit of the law and the spirit of the gospel? There is a religion, of which the Pharisaism of Christ's days was an exaggerated specimen—the very heart and soul of which consists in penances and prayers and fastings—in worship offered, in duties done, in sacrifices made, in mortifications inflicted and endured—all to soothe an agitated conscience, to win a peace with God, to eke out a hope of heaven. To this the faith that is in Christ our Saviour stands directly and diametrically opposed—the one offering as a free gift what the other toils after as a reward; the one inviting us to begin where the other would have us end; the one putting forgiveness and acceptance with God in our hand and calling upon us, in the free spirit of his redeemed, forgiven, adopted children, to live and serve and in all things to submit to our Father which is in heaven—the other holding out the forgiveness and the acceptance away in the distance, and calling upon us, in the spirit of bondage, to labor all through life for their attainment; the one the old tattered garment, the other the piece of new-made cloth.

And the wine of the kingdom, ever as it pours itself afresh from its fountain-head on high into the spirit of man, is it not a new wine that needs new bottles to contain it? If it be indeed the Spirit of Christ which is working in hearts that have been opened to receive it, may we not safely leave it to its own operation there, and allow it to shape the vessel that holds it as it likes? Both, indeed, are needed—the outward form, the inner spirit; nor will any wise or thoughtful man rashly touch or mould into different shape the first,

thinking thereby to improve the second; but neither will he hinder or hamper the second if, by its own proper motion, it is going on gently to remould the first.

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#### IV.

### THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.\*

THE traveller from Jerusalem gets his first sight of the sea of Galilee from the top of Mount Tabor. It is but a small corner of the lake that he sees, lying miles away, deep sunk among the hills. Descending from the height whence this first glimpse of the lake is got, the road to Tiberias leads over an elevated undulating plateau, the one marked feature of which is a curious double-peaked hill, rising about fifty or sixty feet above the general level of the surrounding tableland, and sloping down on its eastern side into the plain of Gennesaret. From the two prominences it presents, this hill is called the Horns of Hattin—Hattin being a village at its base. It overlooks the lake and the plain. You see Capernaum from its summit, lying across the valley about seven miles off. As seen again from Capernaum and the plain, it appears as the highest and loneliest elevation that rises upon that side of the lake. It would naturally be spoken of by the inhabitants of Capernaum and its neighborhood, even as St. Matthew speaks of it, as *the* mountain. It would naturally be the place to which any one seeking for solitude would retire. When somewhere in its neighborhood there came around our Lord “a great multitude of people out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the sea-coast of Tyre and Sidon, and from Galilee and Decapolis, and from Idumea and from beyond Jordan,” (Luke 6:17; Mark 3:8; Matt. 4:25,) and when, seeking relief from the pressure, it is said that he went up into a mountain, no one so likely to be the one referred to by the evangelist as the Horns of Hattin—to which, as the supposed place of their utterance, the name of the Mount of the Beatitudes has for ages been given.

The night upon this mountain was spent by Christ in prayer—alone perhaps upon the higher summit, the disciples slumbering below. At dawn he called them to him, and out of them he chose the twelve and ordained them, “that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach.” But on what principle was the selection made? in what manner was the ordination effected? It

\* Matt. chaps. 5, 6, 7; Luke 6:20-49.



may be presumed that some regard was had to the personal qualifications of those whom the Lord chose for this high office. We know indeed too little of any but two or three of the twelve to trace the special fitness of the human instrument for the work given it to do. Of all but one, however, we may believe that such fitness did exist. But how came that one to be numbered with the rest? It is possible that Judas may have done much to obtrude himself, or that others may have done much to obtrude him upon the notice of the Saviour. We read of one who, with great professions of attachment, volunteered to become a disciple, saying to Jesus, "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest;" whom Jesus neither rejected nor welcomed, meeting his declaration of adherence with the ominous words, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." If, as some have thought, the man who came forward in this way and pressed himself into the discipleship was Judas—if he was a man of acknowledged ability and considerable influence, whom no one at the time had the slightest reason to suspect, who was welcomed by all the other disciples, and commended by them to their Master as a most desirable associate—if the rejection of such a man in such circumstances would have seemed to be an act of caprice without known or apparent reason, this might serve perhaps in some slight degree to explain to us how Judas came at first to be numbered with the twelve. Many will feel as if there were something like profanity in any conjecture of this kind, and all will be satisfied simply to accept the fact that Jesus chose those twelve men, and yet that one of them was a devil.

Was it by simple designation to the office without any form or ceremony? or was it by laying of Christ's hand solemnly on the head of each, then gathering the circle round him and offering up a consecration prayer, that the apostles were set apart? We cannot tell. It is surely singular, however, that the manner of the ordination of the apostles by our Lord himself, in like manner as the ordination of the first presbyters or bishops of the church by the apostles, should have been left unnoticed and undescribed.

The ordination over, Jesus descended to a level spot, either between the two summits or lying at their base. Luke 6:17. The day had now advanced, and the great multitude that had followed him, apprised of his place of retreat, poured in upon him, bringing their diseased along with them. He stood for a time healing all who were brought to him. Retreating then again to the mountain side, he sat down. His disciples seated themselves immediately around him, and the great multitude stood or sat upon the level ground below.



CHRIST PREACHING TO THE MULTITUDE

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Such were the circumstances under which the Sermon on the Mount was delivered. It may have been the first discourse of the kind which St. Matthew had heard; all the more natural, therefore, that he should have been directed to preserve so full a record of it. We have no authority for saying that it was actually the first formal and lengthened address delivered by our Lord. Many other longer or shorter discourses, to smaller or larger audiences, may Jesus have spoken during this period of his ministry. But this was the one selected by Divine Wisdom to be presented as a specimen or sample of our Lord's teaching, as addressed to mixed Galilean audiences in the earlier stages of his ministry. There was a change in his mode of teaching afterwards, even in Galilee, as there was a marked difference between all his discourses there and those addressed to very different audiences in Jerusalem. Here upon the mount he had a vast concourse of people of all castes and from all quarters before him. Nearest to him were his own disciples. To them his words were in the first instance spoken, but they were meant to reach the consciences and hearts of the motley crowd that lay beyond.

Now, if there was one sentiment spread more widely than another throughout this crowd, it was the vague yet ardent expectation beating then in almost every Jewish breast, of some great national deliverance—of the near approach of a new kingdom—the kingdom of God. Of this kingdom they had no higher conception than that it would be a free and independent outward and visible Jewish monarchy. And when it came, then should come the days of liberty and peace, of honor and triumph, and all kinds of blessedness for poor oppressed Judea. With what a delicate hand—not openly and rudely rebuking, yet laying the axe withal at its very roots—was this deep national prejudice now treated by our Lord. What could have run more directly counter to the earthly ambitious hopes, swelling up within the hearts of those around him? what could have served more effectually to check them, than the very first words which Jesus uttered? “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you



falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." How different the kind of blessedness thus described from that which his hearers had been hungering and thirsting after. How different the kind of kingdom thus described from that which they had been expecting he would set up. And, apart from their special use and immediate service as addressed of old to the Galilean audience, these beatitudes remain to teach us wherein the only true, pure, lasting blessedness for man consists; not in any thing outward, not in the gratification of any of our natural passions or desires, our covetousness, or our pride, or our ambition, or our love of pleasure; not in what we have, but in what we are in God's sight and in relation to his empire over our souls. The poor in spirit, those most deeply conscious of their spiritual poverty, their want of that which can alone find favor with God; the mourners whose grief is the fruit of guilt and unworthiness realized and deeply felt; the meek, who bow patiently and submissively to every stroke, whoever be the smiter; the hungerers and thirsters after righteousness, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, the persecuted for righteousness' sake—do we regard these as the happiest of our race? is theirs the kind of happiness upon which our heart is chiefly set, and which we are laboring with our utmost efforts to realize? If not, however ready we may be to extol the pure and high morality of the Sermon on the Mount, we have failed to take in the first and one of the greatest truths which it conveys, as to the source, and seat, and character, and conditions of the only abiding and indestructible blessedness of sinful man.

But while the multitude were cherishing false ideas and expectations about his kingdom, many were cherishing false ideas and fears about Christ himself that equally required to be removed. They had noticed in his teaching the absence of any reference to many of those religious services that they had so punctiliously performed, some disregard of them in his own practice and in that of his disciples. "This man," they began to say, "is an enemy to Moses. He is aiming at nothing short of a subversion of the old, the heaven-given law." Jesus must proclaim how untrue the accusation was. "Think not," he said, "that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." But in what did the true fulfilment of the Mosaic law consist? It was a vast and complicated code, embracing a body of laws for a peculiar people, existing at a particular

period, and organized for a special purpose; subject, therefore, to all the limitations and exhibiting all the adaptations to existing circumstances which, in proportion to the wisdom with which it is framed, all such legislation must display. It had in it commands of a purely ethical and religious character, conveyed in more general and abstract forms; and it had in it a large apparatus of positive enactments and ordinances chiefly meant to symbolize the truths and facts of the Christian dispensation. It was not throughout an expression of God's absolute will, perfect, immutable, meant to be of permanent and universal obligation. Part of it, perfectly adapted to its design, was inherently imperfect; part of it as necessarily transitory. When the time came that the Jewish nation should either cease to exist or cease to have its old functions to discharge, and when all its types and ceremonies had their true meaning expressed and their ends accomplished, then out of this complicated law there would come to be extracted that which was absolutely perfect and universally obligatory. Jesus knew that at his advent that time had come, and assuming the very place and exercising the very prerogative of the divine legislator of the Jews, he begins in this Sermon on the Mount to execute this task. He treats the old Jewish practice of divorce as imperfect, being adapted to a single nation at a particular stage of its moral training, and lays down the original and perfect law of the marriage relationship. In like manner he deals with the *lex talionis*—the rule of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, and with the law and custom as to oaths. But it is especially in his treatment of those commandments about whose permanent obligation there was and could be no doubt, that the novelty and value of his teaching displayed itself. These were negative and prohibitory in their form. "Thou shalt not kill," "Thou shalt not commit adultery," etc. They had been looked at in the letter rather than in the spirit. They had been regarded simply as prohibitions of certain outward acts or crimes. Abstinence from the forbidden deeds had been taken as a keeping of the Divine commands. Obedience had thus come to be looked upon as a thing of outward constraint or mechanical conformity, its merit lying in the force of the constraint, the exactness of the conformity. It was thus that the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees consisted mainly in a stiff and formal adherence to the letter of the precept, to the neglect often and sometimes to the contradiction of its spirit. This fatal error Christ exposes, taking up commandment after commandment, unfolding the spirituality and extent of the requirement, showing how it reached not simply or mainly to the regulation of the outward conduct, but primarily and

above all things to the state of the heart; that murder lay in embryo in an angry feeling; that adultery lurked in a licentious look; that it was not alone when the name of God was vainly used that irreverence might be exhibited and profane swearing practised; that the old Jewish rule of retaliation was no rule for the regulation of the affections or the guidance of the conduct in a pure and perfect state; that from the heart every sentiment of malice or revenge must be banished, and in the conduct the evil done to us by another remain unresented, unavenged, the enemy to be loved, the persecutor to be prayed for; and all this done that we might be merciful as our Father that is in heaven is merciful, perfect as he is perfect, children of him who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust.

This end and aim of being like to, of being imitators of God, was one too pure, too high, too holy, to suffer corruption and the worm to enter into it by admixture with the selfish and ignoble motive of courting human approval, winning human applause. Too much of the almsgiving and the fasting and the praying that he saw practised around him was done to be seen of men—prompted by no other motive—was nothing but hypocrisy, utterly offensive to his Father in heaven. Concealed and unostentatious let the givings and the fastings be, short and simple and secret the prayers of those who would be his disciples and true children of his Father, whom seeing in secret he would in due time openly reward.

Let all be done as unto him with an undivided allegiance, for no man can serve two masters: and with an unbounded trust, for, having such a Father, why should there be any over-carefulness for earthly things—those things that He knows we have need of, or any undue concern about a future which is not ours but his? Why so anxious about food and raiment? It is God who sustains the life of the body; you must trust him for that, the greater thing: then why distrust him for the less? Behold the fowls of the air; consider the lilies of the field; look at the grass that grows beneath your feet. Not theirs, as yours, the capacity for trust and toil and foresight. A worthless, fleeting existence theirs as compared with yours; yet see how they are not only cared for, but lavishly adorned. “Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Conscious of your own far shortcomings from that perfect confidence you should cherish, that constant service you should be ren-

dering, be not severe in criticising or condemning others. Judge not, that ye be not judged. "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, and considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite; first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

It may be very difficult to be all, to do all that I am now telling you you ought to be and to do; but is there not an open and effectual way for having every felt spiritual want relieved? "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

Drawing from the exhaustless fountain of grace and strength that in him is opened to you, fear not to adopt this as the one comprehensive rule of your whole bearing and conduct toward others: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets."

Before the days of Christ there was a great Jewish teacher, Hillel. An inquirer once came to him asking the strange question: "Can you teach one the whole law during the time that I am able to stand on one foot?" "Yes," said Hillel, "it is contained in this one rule: Whatsoever ye would not wish that your neighbor should do to you, do it *not* to him." This and other sayings of preceding rabbis have been quoted with a view of detracting somewhat from the originality of the moral teaching of Christ. Yet even here, while the resemblance between the lessons taught is so marked, one grand difference may be discerned—a difference that runs through so large a part of the Saviour's precepts as compared with those of all other moral legislators. He translates the negative into the positive. With him it is not—be not, do not; but, be and do. In few instances are any specific rules of conduct laid down. To plant the right spirit and motive in the heart, out of which all true morality proceeds, is the great object He aims at. 'Look up to God,' he says to us, 'as indeed your Father—ever living, ever loving, patiently bearing with you, largely providing for you, willing to forgive you. Walk humbly, meekly, trusting before him. Commit your way to him, cast all your care on him, seek all your supplies from him, render all your returns to him. Look upon all your fellow-men as children of the same Father, members of the same family. Love each other, and live together as brethren, bearing yourselves towards all around you patiently, forgivingly, generously, hopefully. The gate thus opened is strait, the way is narrow,



but it is the only one that leadeth unto life. And, finally, remember that it is practice, not profession, that can alone conduct you along the path to the throne in heaven. Hear then, and do, that ye may be like the wise man who built his house upon a rock, "and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock."

Such is a rapid, imperfect sketch of the Sermon on the Mount, regarded mainly from an historical point of view, in its bearings upon the audience to which it was originally addressed. The people who first heard it, we are told, were astonished at its doctrine. Well they might be. It was so different from what they had been accustomed to. No labored argument, no profound discussion, no doubtful disputation, no nice distinctions, no scheme of doctrines formally and elaborately propounded, no exact routine of religious services prescribed. It dealt with the simplest, plainest moral and religious truths and duties; and did this in the simplest, plainest manner; directly, familiarly, colloquially—a freshness about it like that of the morning breeze which played over the mountain side. The thing, however, that seems to have struck the listeners most, was the calm, unhesitating, authoritative tone in which the whole was uttered. "They were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." Here is One who comes forth from none of the great schools—who has sat at the feet of none of the great masters—who uses no book language—who appeals to no authority but his own—a young untaught Nazarene; and yet he takes it upon him to pronounce with the utmost confidence as to who the truly blessed are, and reckons among them those who were to be railed at and persecuted for his sake. Here is One who does not shrink from taking into his hands the law and the prophets, acting not simply as their expositor—the clearer of them from all false traditional interpretations. He is bold enough to say that he came to fulfil them; in one remarkable instance, at least—that of the law which permitted divorce—speaking as the original lawgiver was alone entitled to do, declaring that the time for this permission had now ceased, and that henceforth such divorces as Moses had tolerated were not to be allowed. Here is One who speaks of God as one who fully knew and had a right to declare how his children were to act so as to please him; whom he would forgive, whom he would reward, upon whom he would bestow his gifts. Here is One who, though seated on that Galilean mountain, with nothing to distinguish him from the humble fishermen around him, speaks of a day on which he should be seated on the throne of universal judgment, to whom many

should say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?"—to whom he was to reply, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

In consequence of the simplicity, purity, and elevation of the moral precepts which it contains, and still more, perhaps, because of none of the peculiar doctrines as to the person, character, office, and work of Christ as the Mediator being found in it, this Sermon on the Mount has been greedily seized upon and highly extolled by many as the true epitome of Christianity—as Christ's own gospel coming from his own lips. But it is far less difficult for us to discern the reasons why the truths of the incarnation and the propitiatory sacrifice were not at this time and to that audience alluded to or dwelt upon by Jesus, than it is for any who would reduce him to the level of a mere moral legislator to account for the position which, even when enunciating the simplest moral precepts, he assumed—for the tone of authority in which he speaks. Dimly, indeed, through this Sermon on the Mount does the Jesus of the cross appear, but the Jesus of the throne is here, and once that we have learned from other after-teachings of himself and his apostles to know and love and trust in him as our great High Priest, who has bought us with his blood, it will be the habit and delight of every true and faithful follower of his to take up and dwell upon that wonderful discourse, in which, more clearly and fully than in any other words of human speech, the very spirit and essence of a humble, child-like faith in God, and the lofty ideal of a perfect, a heavenly morality, are unfolded and enforced.

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## V.

### THE RAISING OF THE WIDOW'S SON AND THE RULER'S DAUGHTER.\*

THE multitude that listened to the Sermon on the Mount followed Jesus from the hill-side into Capernaum, thronging round the house into which he entered, and pressing their sick so urgently on his notice that he "could not so much as eat bread." A mode of life like this—out all night upon the mountain-top, teaching, walking, working all day long without food or rest—so affected the minds of his immediate relatives when they heard of it, that they "went out

\* Luke 7:11-17; 8:41-56; Matt. 9:18-26; Mark 5:22-43.

to lay hold of him, for they said, He is beside himself." Failing in their endeavors, they left him to pursue his eccentric course.

It was in the course of the busy day which followed the delivery of the Sermon on the Mount that the centurion's servant was healed, and the opportunity was thereby given to Jesus to hold up to the eyes of the people an example of such faith as he had not found—no, not in Israel. On the following day he left Capernaum. "Many of his disciples and much people" went with him. They had a long day's walk over the hills of Galilee, skirting the base of Tabor, and descending into the plain of Esdraelon. The sun was sinking in the west, away behind the ridge of Carmel, and was gilding with his evening beams the slopes of little Hermon, as Jesus and the band which followed him approached the village of Nain. This village is now a confused heap of the rudest Syrian huts, unenclosed, with no ruins of ancient buildings, nor any antiquities around, save the tombs in the rock upon the hill-side, where for ages they have buried the dead. And yet it stands next to Nazareth and Bethlehem and Bethany in the sacred interest attached to it. We are so sure of its identity, it is so small, so isolated, having nothing but the one wonderful incident to mark its history, that the Saviour's living presence was almost as vividly realized by us when entering it as when we sat by the side of Jacob's well. We stood at the end of the village which looks northward towards Galilee, and tried to recall the scene. Jesus and his train of followers have crossed the plain, and are drawing near to the village. Another company moves slowly and sadly out of its gate and meets them. It is a funeral procession; a large one, for all the villagers have come forth; but there is no mark or token that it is the funeral of one who had been rich or in any way distinguished. The bier is of the plainest, and there follows it as chief mourner a solitary woman, clad in humblest guise. Jesus has none beside him, as he stops and looks, to tell him who this woman is—who the dead for whom she mourns. He does not need the information; he knows her history; he knows her grief better than any inhabitant of Nain. To his eye it is a becoming and beautiful thing that grief like hers should have such homage paid to it, should have drawn the whole village out after her by the pure force of sympathy. Her claim, indeed, upon that sympathy is strong. This is not the first bier she has followed. She had wept for another before she wept for him whom they are now carrying to the grave. She is a widow—weeping now behind the bier of her only son. Bereft of every earthly stay she walks, a picture of perfect desolation.

"And when the Lord saw her he had compassion on her." As

soon as his eye rests on her his heart fills full of pity. Was this the first funeral he had ever met by the wayside along with his disciples? Was this the first mourner he had ever noticed go weeping thus behind the dead? It may not have been so; yet never perhaps before had he seen a poor lone widowed mother shed such bitter tears over the death of an only son. The sight moves him at least to do what he had never done before. He goes up to the woman, and says to her "*Weep not.*" Wrapped up in her consuming grief, how surprised she must have been at being accosted in such a way at such a time. Does this stranger mean to mock her, to deal rudely with her in her grief. In any other she might have been ready to repel and resent the unseasonable intrusion—the strange unreasonable speech; but there is something in the loving, pitying eye that looks at her as she glances at him timidly through her tears—something of hope, of promise, of assurance in the gentle yet authoritative tones of his voice that quenches all disposition to repel or resent. But why does Christ first say to her, "*Weep not*"? Does he not know what he is about to do? Does he not know that within a few minutes that will be done by him which, without any bidding on his part, will dry up all her tears? He does; but he cannot go forward to his great act without yielding to the impulse of pity; dropping into the ear of the mourner, not as a cold word of command, fitted only to give needless pain, but as a spontaneous expression of his warm personal compassion—the words, "*Weep not.*" Such a preface to the miracle speaks to us as plainly of the tenderness of Christ's sympathy as the miracle itself proclaims the infinitude of his power.

"And he came and touched the bier, and they that bore him stood still." And all stand as still as the bearers; the two groups, the one from Capernaum and the other from Nain, lost in wonder as to what is to happen next. All eyes turn upon Jesus. His turn upon the bier. The silence is broken by the simple majestic words, "Young man, I say unto thee, *Arise.*" The young man rises, looks about with wonder, and begins to speak. Jesus takes him by the hand, lifts him from the bier, delivers him to his mother. The deed of mercy is done, and nothing more is told, but that a great fear came upon all. "And they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people. And this rumor of him went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the region round about."

It was a few days or weeks before or after this incident (for the date is uncertain) that one of the rulers of the synagogue at Caper-



naum, Jairus by name, came to Jesus as he sat at meat in the house of Levi, and "cast himself at his feet, and worshipped him, and besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death; come and lay thy hands upon her, that she may be healed, and she shall live." Jesus arose at once and went with Jairus; so did his disciples, and so did much people; the very promptness of Christ's compliance with the ruler's request stimulating their curiosity. The distance could not have been great from the house of Levi to that of Jairus, and might have speedily been traversed, but the crowd that thronged around Jesus by the way somewhat impeded the movement. It gave, however, to one poor woman the opportunity she had long been seeking. Twelve long years she had been a sufferer, her illness one that made her very touch pollution. All she had she had spent upon physicians. It seemed rather to have aggravated her complaint. Seeing or hearing about Jesus, a belief in the healing virtue that lay in him had taken possession of her mind. Her timidity, her sense of shame, kept her from going openly to him, telling him of her malady, and asking him to exert his power on her behalf. But if she could in any way unseen get at him, if she could but touch his clothes, she felt that she should be made whole. And now he goes through this great crowd. It is the very occasion she has been seeking for, and she seizes it; gets behind him, presses through the people, and touches the hem of his outer garment. She is instantly healed, but as instantly arrested. The touch has scarce been given, the healing scarce effected, when Jesus turns round and says, "Who touched my clothes?" They all deny the deed. Peter expostulates with his Master. "The multitude," he says, "throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?" Jesus knows as well as Peter that many had been near enough for their and his garments to have come into contact; but he knows, too, as Peter knew not, that there had been a touch with a distinct, deliberate purpose, altogether different from that of a mere random contact, a touch that had drawn virtue out of him. Who gave it? His eye looked round to see, is already resting on the woman, who, seeing that she is not hid, fearing and trembling, yet glad and grateful, throws herself on her knees before him, and getting the better of all her womanly feelings, declares unto him "before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately."

Had Jesus been displeased at being touched? Had he grudged in any way that the virtue had in such a way been extracted? Was it to detect and rebuke a culprit that he had challenged the multitude? No: it was because he knew how very strong was this wom-

an's faith—a faith sufficient to draw out at once in fullest measure the healing efficacy, and yet a faith that had in it a superstitious element, the fancy that in some magical mysterious way contact of any kind established between her and Christ would cure her. If he allowed her to go away undetected, the healing filched, as it were, unconsciously from the healer, this fancy might be confirmed, the superstitious element in her faith enhanced. Therefore it was that he would not suffer the secrecy. He would meet and answer the faith which under the heavy pressure and in despair of all other help had thrown itself somewhat blindly yet confidently upon his aid. But he will not allow her to depart without letting her know how wrong and how needless it had been in her to attempt concealment, without letting her and all around her know what was the kind of touch that she had given which had established the right connection between her and him, and opened the way for the remedy reaching the disease. “And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole, go in peace.”

There is not one of all our Saviour's many miracles of healing fuller of comfort and encouragement. For if his mode of dealing with our spiritual diseases be shadowed out in the modes of the bodily cures that he effected, whenever we grow sad or despondent as we think how much of fear, or shame, or error, or weakness, or superstition mingles with the faith we cherish, then let us remember that if only the depth and inveteracy of the spiritual disease be felt, if with or without a long trial of them we have been led to despair of all other physicians of the soul, and to look alone to Jesus Christ, he who accepted this woman's faith with all its weakening and defiling ingredients, will not cast us off. A timid trembling touch of him, be it only the touch of humility and trust, will still bring forth that healing virtue which wraps itself up in no guarded seclusion, but delights to pour itself freely out into every open and empty receptacle that is brought to it.

The stoppage by the way, however brief, must have been somewhat trying to Jairus, but he showed no impatience. There was a short delay, but with it a new proof of Christ's power well fitted to fortify his faith. But just as the healed woman is sent away, the messenger arrives, who says, “Thy daughter is dead, why troublest thou the Master any further?” The words were perhaps not meant for the ear of Christ, yet it caught them up, and the moment it did so, knowing and feeling to what a strain the faith of Jairus was exposed, and how much he needed to be assured and comforted, “as soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith to the ruler

of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe." Jairus hears the reassuring words, and, heedless of the suggestion made, follows Jesus as before.

At last the house of the dead is reached. Jesus suffers none of his followers to enter with him save Peter, James, and John, the three privileged apostles who were with him on the mount of his transfiguration and in the garden of his agony, the three chosen witnesses of the highest exercise of his power, the fullest display of his glory, the greatest depth of his sorrow. The first apartment of the ruler's house is occupied by those who fill it with a perfect tumult of bemoaning sounds. It was the custom to hire such mourners on these occasions—the more numerous, the more vehement, the higher the station of the family. The outward demonstration of grief that they here make is excessive, but there is no heart in all the sound and show, no true utterance of any real sorrow. As at discord at once with his own feeling and with his formed purpose, Jesus rebukes the wailers, and says to them, "Give place; why make ye this ado? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth." Not dead? Can they, the hired officials, not tell the difference between sleep and death? Who is he that speaks to them so slightingly, so authoritatively taking it on him, stranger though he be, to stop their lamentations? They "laugh him to scorn:" this real laughter still more incongruous with his presence and his purpose than the feigned grief. With Jairus to second him, Jesus puts all the people out, takes "the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying." He takes the dead child by the hand, simply says, "Talitha cumi—damsel, arise!" and she rises, weak as from a bed of illness, yet with all the seeds of the mortal malady which had laid her low banished from her frame. Having directed that some food should be given her, Jesus straitly charged the parents that they should tell no man; an injunction, let us believe, that they did their best to keep, and yet St. Matthew tells us "the fame thereof went abroad into all that land."

It is difficult to understand why it was that Jesus laid such a stringent injunction of secrecy upon the parents in this instance. Had the widow's son not been raised from the dead about the same time, and in circumstances of the utmost publicity, we might have imagined that there was a desire on the part of Christ to throw, for a time at least, a veil over this particular form of the manifestation of his power. But though that other miracle had not been wrought, had this one stood alone, how could it be hidden? There were too many that had seen the damsel die, or mourned over her when dead,

to allow of any concealment. As we think of the difficulty, we might almost say impossibility, of such concealment, the thought occurs—and other instances in which the same command was given by Christ may in the same way be explained—that it was not so much with any desire or intention to secure secrecy that the order was issued, as to prevent those who had the closest personal interest in the miracle being the first or the loudest in noising it abroad.

There does not seem to have been any previous acquaintance between Christ and the widow of Nain. It may be doubted whether she had ever seen Jesus till she met him as she was going out to bury her son. We do not read of Jesus ever being in Nain but on that one occasion. It lay beyond the line of those circuits of Galilee which he was in the habit of making. We are not surprised, therefore, at noticing that his interference there was voluntary, without any solicitation or hope entertained beforehand on the part of the mourner. It was different with Jairus at Capernaum. He was a well-known man, living in the town which Jesus had chosen as his headquarters in Galilee. In all likelihood he was one of the rulers of the Jews who formed the deputation that a short time before had waited on Jesus to ask his aid on behalf of the Roman centurion. It was quite natural that, when his “one only daughter” lay a-dying, he should apply on her account to Christ. But there may have been in his character and connections something of which we are ignorant, which made it undesirable that he should be forward in proclaiming what had happened in his house.

It was a case of recovery from the dead, about which there might be some cavilling. The child could have been but a short time dead; long enough, indeed, to establish the certainty of the event, yet not so long as to hinder any one from saying that it was literally and not figuratively true, “She is not dead, but sleepeth.” In this respect we notice a difference, a progression in the three instances of raising from the dead recorded by the evangelists—that of Jairus’ daughter, of the widow’s son, and of Lazarus. It is not distinctly said to be so; but we presume that these were the only three cases in which the dead were restored to life by Christ. The one was soon after death, the other immediately before burial, and the third after the dead man had lain four days in the grave—the variety of the period after death at which the restoration was in each case effected not, perhaps, without a purpose. For these three great miracles stand, in one respect, at the head of all our Lord’s works of wonder. They were the highest instances of the forth-putting of his divine almighty power. With respect to many of his other works, questions might be raised as to



the nature or extent of the power required for their performance, but none as to these. Life in all its forms, from the highest to the lowest, is that mysterious thing which, when once destroyed, none but the Creator—the great Lifegiver—can restore. Were a dead man actually revived before our eyes, we could not doubt that the power of the Omnipotent had gone forth to do it. In no case did Jesus Christ so conspicuously and undoubtedly show himself to be clothed with that power as when he raised the dead. The power, indeed, by which he wrought such miracles might not have been naturally his own. It might have been a delegated power given him for the time, not permanently belonging to him. He might have raised the dead as Elijah raised the son of the widow at Zarephath, as Elisha did the son of the Shunamite. Had it been so, we should have had some evidence thereof—some appeal on the part of the mere human agent to the great Being whose power was for the moment lent and exercised. It was with trouble and with pain, after much and earnest prayer, that Elijah and Elisha, the only raisers of the dead in all the preceding ages, had succeeded. No one who saw or heard them could have imagined that they claimed any natural or inherent power of their own over the dead to call them back to life. They would themselves have counted it as the greatest insult to Jehovah to do so. How is it in this respect with Jesus Christ? Stand beside him as he calls the dead to life. Look at the manner of his acting; listen to the words that he employs. Is it as a servant, the delegate of another, that he speaks and acts? Is it with any consciousness on his part, felt or exhibited, that he was rising above the level at which he ordinarily stood, that he was then doing something which he had been specially commissioned and supernaturally qualified to accomplish? Surely there is nothing more remarkable about these raisings from the dead by Jesus Christ than the simple, easy, unostentatious way in which they were effected. “Young man, I say unto thee, Arise!” “Maid, arise!” “Lazarus, come forth!” He speaks thus to the dead, and they hear and live. It is in the style of Him who said, “Let there be light, and there was light.” It is the Lord of the living and of the dead whose voice penetrates the unseen world, and summons the departed spirit to resume its mortal tenement.

But if, as to the power he wields, Jesus never presents himself to our eye in a diviner, never does he show himself in a more human aspect than in these raisings from the dead. Can we overlook the fact that they were those of the only son of a widowed mother, the only daughter, if not the only child, of two fond parents, the only brother of two affectionate sisters—of those whose loss in their

respective homesteads would be so deeply felt, of those whose restoration quickened so acute a grief into such an ecstatic joy? And in each case there was something quite singular in the tenderness of our Lord's conduct towards the mourners. He knew beforehand how speedily the anxiety that he witnessed would be relieved, all the sorrow chased away; but the "Weep not" to the mother before he touched the bier, the "Fear not, only believe," to the agitated father, the tears that fell before the grave of Lazarus, what a testimony do they bear to the exquisite susceptibility of the Saviour's spirit—to the quickness, the fulness, the liveliness of his sympathy with human grief. It is even then, when he is most divine, that he is most human—when he lifts himself the highest above our level that he links himself the closest to us as a true brother of our humanity. Such power to help, such readiness and capacity to sympathize meet but in one Being.

Many passages of the New Testament might be quoted which assign it as one of the reasons of the incarnation that there might be such a Being, one compassed about with infirmities, one touched with a fellow-feeling with our infirmities, one tempted in all things like as we are, a merciful as well as a faithful, a compassionate as well as an all-powerful, all-prevalent High Priest over the house of God. The great Son of God, when he stooped to become a man, did not become thereby more merciful, more kind, more compassionate than he had been; yet are we not warranted to believe that a human element was introduced and infused into them which otherwise the mercy, kindness, compassion would not have possessed? If the manhood was a gainer by bringing it into close, mysterious union with the Divinity, was there no gain to the Divinity by the incarnation?—not, of course, a gain absolutely, not a gain as to any original, essential faculty or attribute of the Supreme, but a gain as to the bringing of the Divine Being into closer and more sympathetic fellowship with man? We all know how difficult it is, whatever be the natural capacity and largeness of our pity, to sympathize fully and tenderly with a kind of trial we have never felt. Those who have never wept over any dead they loved, can they enter into the grief of the bereaved? And how could we, but by the incarnation, have had one who could enter as Jesus can into all our sorrows?

Why was such a sympathy as his provided for us, but that as sinners as well as sufferers we might cast ourselves upon it for support? Jesus is the great raiser of human souls as well as of human bodies. He quickeneth whom he will. The hour has come when all that are in the grave of sin, of spiritual death, may hear his voice. That voice is sounding all around us as in the ears of the dead. "Awake,"

it says to each of us—"awake, thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life." Let us awake, and with life new-given turn to the Lifegiver; rejoicing to know that as tenderly as he handed her new-raised son to the widow of Nain, as tenderly as he ordered the food to be given to the little daughter of Jairus, so tenderly will he watch over the first stages of our spiritual being; and that as fully as the griefs of widowed mother and weeping parents were shared in of old by Him in Galilee, so fully will he share in all the griefs of our earthly history, till he take us to the land where his own gracious hand shall wipe off the tears from every eye, and we shall no more need another to weep with us in our sorrows.

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## VI.

### THE EMBASSY OF THE BAPTIST—THE GREAT INVITATION.\*

OUR Lord's public ministry in Galilee began at the time that John had been cast into prison, and had now continued for more than half a year. There was much in this ministry which those disciples of the Baptist who kept aloof from Jesus could not comprehend. There was the entire absence of that ascetic rigor and stern denunciation of all iniquity, by which their master's character and teaching had been distinguished. There were no fastings, no prescribed repeated prayers; there was the call of a publican to be an apostle, there was the eating and drinking with publicans and sinners. All this appeared to them not only different from, but inconsistent with the idea of that kingdom of whose advent their master had announced himself as the herald. Some of them carried their doubts and difficulties to John himself in the prison. Hearing from them of the works of Christ, the Baptist sent two of their number to Jesus, and bade them put to him the question, "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" As coming from John himself, and meant for his personal satisfaction, the question certainly would imply that some temporary misgiving had crept into the Baptist's mind. It is somewhat difficult to believe, after the revelations made to him, after what he had seen and heard at the baptism, after his own repeated public proclamations of it, that his faith in the Messiahship of Jesus had been shaken. His long and unexpected imprisonment, however, must have severely tried his faith. To such a man, from infancy a child of the desert, who had roamed with such free footstep through the wilder-

ness of Engedi, who, when the time came for his manifestation to Israel, had but exchanged the freedom of his mountain solitudes for those liberties of speech and action he took with his fellow-countrymen, the months of his imprisonment must have moved slowly and drearily along, turning even his strength into weakness. The chilly damp of being hurried unexpectedly from Herod's presence and his former open, active life into the cheerless, idle solitude of the prison, fell all the chillier upon his heart on his coming to know that Jesus had been apprised of his imprisonment, and that yet no message of sympathy had been sent, that no movement for his deliverance was made. His notions of the coming kingdom may not have been different from those entertained at the time by the apostles and other followers of Christ. Perhaps he fancied that at the setting up of this kingdom all injustice and oppression and spiritual wickedness in high places was to be done away, the axe to be laid at their root, the fan to be so used as thoroughly to purge the threshing-floor. Perhaps, in rebuking Herod as he did, he thought that it was but a first blow dealt at that which the mightier than he who was to come after him was wholly to destroy. And when, instead of his expectations being fulfilled, he was left unvisited, uncheered, unhelped; and he heard of the course which Jesus was pursuing, gathering crowds indeed around him, but carefully abstaining from announcing himself as the Messiah, or doing any thing towards the erection of a new kingdom—in some season of disquietude and despondency, perplexed and a little impatient, sharing their feelings, and in the hope of at once relieving their doubts and removing his own misgivings, he sent two of his disciples to put to him a question which might be the means of drawing from Jesus a public declaration of his Messiahship, and of inducing him openly to inaugurate the new kingdom.\*

The messengers arrived and delivered their message at a very opportune conjuncture. "In the same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight." Luke 7:21. Jesus kept John's messengers for a season near him instead of answering them, going on with his healing work. He then turned to them and said, "Go your way, and tell

\* Many think that it was for the sake of his disciples, and for their sakes alone, that the Baptist sent them on this errand, not that he had any doubts himself, but that he knew they had. It is altogether likely that he had some regard to their establishment in a true faith in Christ. The question, however, put into their lips comes too directly from himself, and the answer is directed too plainly and pointedly to him, to allow us to shut out the idea of personal relief and satisfaction being contemplated.



John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached." It is not simply to the miracles as displays of superhuman power that Jesus appeals; it is to their kind and character, as peculiarly and prophetically Messianic. Jesus had hitherto refrained from assuming the title of the Messiah, or announcing himself as such. John by his messengers urges him to do so. Christ contents himself with simply pointing to such works done by him as the Baptist could not fail to recognize as a fulfilment of those prophecies of Isaiah, in which the days and doings of the Messiah were described. Nor can we fail to notice that, side by side with the greatest of the miracles, reserved as the closing, crowning testimony to the Messiahship, is the fact that to the poor the gospel was preached; to the poor as well as to the rich, to no favored people, class, or section of mankind, to all in that universal character which all sustain as sinful, responsible, immortal. The words that Jesus added, "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me," may have carried with them a special allusion to the Baptist, while proclaiming the blessedness of the man who was not offended at the patience and gentleness of Jesus, his readiness to wait and to suffer, to invite and encourage, rather than to denounce and to punish.

Having given them what seemed a sufficient answer, Jesus sent John's messengers away. He had something more, however, to say to the people that was not for the Baptist's ear; which must not be said till the messengers were gone. What they had just seen and heard was fitted to create an unfavorable impression, as if the faith, or fortitude, or patience of John had utterly given way. Eager to shield the character of his forerunner, Jesus turned to the multitude and said to them concerning John, "What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?" a man bowing and bending as the reed does before every passing breeze, a man fickle of purpose, changeable in faith, believing at Bethabara, disbelieving now at Machærus? Not such a man is John; rock-like, not reed-like—such as he was in the wilderness, such is he in Herod's prison. "What went ye out to see? A man clothed in soft raiment?" caring for the comforts and luxuries of life, or a man who, all negligent as he had been of these before, feels now the hair-cloth to be too hard a garment, and would fain exchange it for a softer one? Not such a man is John. The wearers and lovers of soft raiment you will find in palaces, not in prisons. John cares as little for such raiment now as when of his own free will he chose the hair-cloth as his garment.

‘But what went ye out to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.’ The only one among all the prophets whose course and office were themselves the subjects of prophecy; whose birth, like that of his great Master, an angel was commissioned to announce; his predecessors seeing but from afar across the breadth of intervening centuries, he, the friend of the bridegroom, standing by the bridegroom’s side, his office such towards Christ as to elevate him to a height above any ever reached before, yet this kind of greatness, one springing from position and office, as local, external, temporary, not once to be mentioned alongside of that other kind of greatness which is moral, spiritual, intrinsic, eternal. “For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

More than one public testimony had been borne by John to Jesus. Jesus answers these by the witness he thus bears to John. But as he thinks of himself in conjunction with the Baptist, the strange and inconsistent treatment that they respectively had met with from the men of that generation presents itself to his thoughts. Matt. 11:16-19. It is but seldom that any thing like criticism or complaint touching those around him comes from the lips of Jesus. All the more interesting is the glance that he here casts, the judgment that he here pronounces, upon the men of his own age and nation. Addressed by two different voices, speaking in two different tones, they had turned a deaf ear to both. The rigor of the law came to them in the message of the Baptist; they took offence at it. The gentleness and love of the gospel came to them in the message of Jesus; they took equal offence at it; justifying in either case their conduct by fixing on something in the character or life of each of the two messengers which they had turned into matter of complaint and accusation; guilty of great unfairness in doing so, exhibiting the grossest inconsistency, charging opposite excesses upon John and upon Jesus, saying of the one that he was too austere and ascetic, that he had a devil—saying of the other that he was too free and social, that he was a gluttonous man and a winebibber, the friend of publicans and sinners. Had it been any other two of Heaven’s chosen messengers that they had to deal with, they might have had less difficulty in fixing on some irregularity or eccentricity of conduct out of which to fashion the shelter they sought to construct. But that even with them they tried this expedient, and imagined that they had

succeeded, only shows to what lengths that principle or tendency of our nature will go which seeks to mix up the claims of religion with the character of its advocate.

But now the Saviour's thoughts pass onward from the contemplation of that folly and inconsistency which a familiar similitude borrowed from the market-place may expose, to dwell more profoundly upon the conduct of those cities wherein most of his mighty works were done. In endeavoring to follow and fathom from this point onwards the train of our Lord's reflections, as recorded by the evangelist, we enter a region remote and very elevated. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day." Who is he who announces so confidently what certain communities would have done had they been placed in other circumstances than those in which they actually stood, and what altered outward destiny would have followed the different course pursued? "It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon and for the land of Sodom at the day of judgment than for you." Who is he who anticipates the verdicts of eternity, pronouncing so confidently upon the greater and the lesser guilt, fore-announcing the lighter and the heavier doom?

But now, before the eye of the man Christ Jesus, there spreads out a section of the great mystery that hangs over this world's spiritual history. Here are men—these inhabitants of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum—involved in all the greater guilt, incurring all the heavier doom, in consequence of the presence of Jesus in the midst of them. There were men—those inhabitants of Sodom, and Tyre, and Sidon, who, had they lived in an after-age and enjoyed the privileges bestowed upon the others, would have repented and shared in all the blessings of the heavenly kingdom. How many questions, as we stand in front of facts like these, press upon our thoughts and rise to our trembling lips—questions touching the principles and procedure of the divine government as affecting the future and eternal destinies of our race—questions we cannot answer, that it pains and perplexes us to the uttermost even to entertain! It is in this very region that there comes one of the greatest trials of our faith. Was there no trial of the like kind for the man Christ Jesus, as he, too, stood gazing down into these depths? In what way or to what extent the human spirit of our Lord lay open to that burden and

pressure which a contemplation of the sins and sufferings here and hereafter of so many of our fellow-creatures brings down upon every thoughtful spirit that has any of the tenderness of humanity in it, it is not for us to determine. But that he who was tempted in all things like as we are did at this time feel something of this burden and pressure, seems clear from the attitude into which he immediately throws himself. "At that time"—when thought was hovering over this dark and awful region—Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven. Some light has broken in upon that darkness from above, drawing his eyes upwards to its source. Some voice from above has spoken, that comes, as his own came upon the troubled waters of the lake, to still the inward agitation of his thoughts. "Jesus answered and said, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth!" Infinitely wise, infinitely merciful, infinitely loving Father, thou art Lord of heaven and earth. The past has all been ordered—the future will be all arranged, by thee, and in thy character and purposes and providence over all as at once the Father and the Judge, the solution lies of all that to created eyes may seem obscure. "I thank thee . . . that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Why are the things that belong to their eternal peace hidden from some and revealed to others, hidden from so many, revealed to comparatively so few? One beam of light falls upon the darkness here, and for it the thanks are given.

— It is not an arbitrary distinction, drawn by a capricious hand that loves to show its power. The fate of Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon was not one that it was impossible for them to have evaded, that nothing could have turned aside. They might have repented, and had they repented, the ruin had not come. A thick cloud, charged with bolts of vengeance, hung over Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, because of their unbelief. All over the land it was but one of a family, or two of a city, who had welcomed the Saviour and his message. The right interpretation of all this was not given by saying that it was by a divine decree that had no regard to the character and conduct of each, that the eyes of some were blinded and the eyes of others opened to the heavenly light. It was from the wise and prudent, who thought themselves so much wiser or better than others, whose pride it was that blinded them, that the gospel was hidden. It was to the babes, to the humble, the meek, the teachable, that it had been revealed. And it is not so much for the hiding it from the one as for the revealing it to the other that Jesus here gave thanks. On two after-occasions of his life he had each of the two alternatives—the hiding and the revealing, separately and exclusively before



him, and the difference of the emotions felt and expressed by him marked the difference of their effects upon his mind and heart. Would we know what impression the revealing made, let us plant ourselves by his side as the Seventy return from their brief but successful mission, and tell him of the results; when, without a shadow on his joy, he rejoices in spirit, and repeats in words the very thanksgiving that he now offered. Would we know what impression the hiding made, let us plant ourselves beside him as he beheld the city and wept over it, exclaiming, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

But is it a full solution of the mystery that those left in darkness have themselves, by their wilfulness and pride and carnality, created a medium through which the heavenly light cannot pass? Why is it, if the spirits of all men are equally and absolutely beneath the control of the Creator, that any are suffered to remain in such condition? There is no answer to such a question; for, take up the great enigma of the doings of God and the destinies of men at what end you may, approach it from what quarter you please, adopt whatever method of solution you may prefer, make your way through the difficulties that beset you as far as you can, sooner or later you reach the point where explanation fails, and where there is nothing left for us but to join with him who said, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

The occasion now before us may have been the first in which Jesus was seen and heard in the act of prayer. The stopping of the current of his address to them by the offering up of a short and solemn thanksgiving to his Father in heaven must have made a deep impression on the multitude. It was singularly fitted to excite wonder and awe, and to lead them to inquire what the peculiar relationship was in which Jesus stood to the great Being whom he so addressed. Was it not as one reading their thoughts, and graciously condescending to unfold so much of the mystery of his Sonship to the Father, that Jesus went on to say, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father, . . . and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." The Baptist, in his closing testimony to Jesus, had declared, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." Jesus now takes up and appropriates this testimony. With special reference, we may believe, to the things hidden and revealed of which he had been speaking, he says: 'All things—all those things concerning man's relationship to God, and his condition here and hereafter, have not simply been

revealed, but been delivered to me—handed over for adjustment, for discovery to and bestowal upon men; and chiefly that of the true knowledge of God.' Intimate and complete is the mutual knowledge which the Father and the Son have of one another, a knowledge in kind and in degree incommunicable. It is the Father alone who knoweth who the Son is; the Son alone who knoweth who the Father is. "As the Father knoweth me," said Jesus, "even so know I the Father." John 10:15. Finite may measure finite, like comprehend its like, man know what is in man, but here it is Infinite embracing Infinite, the divine Son and the divine Father compassing and fathoming the divine nature, and the divine attributes belonging equally to both.

And yet there is a knowledge of the Father to which man may reach, yet reach only by receiving it through the Son. Had we been told simply that no man knoweth the Father but the Son, nor the Son but the Father, we should not have known to which of the two we were to look for any such acquaintance with either or both as our finite minds are capable of attaining; but when Jesus says "no man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him," he announces himself to us as the sole revealer of the Father; this is no small or secondary part of his gracious office, to make God clearly known to us as our Father which is in heaven. To some obscure and partial knowledge of the Supreme Being as Creator, Upholder, Sovereign, Governor, we may attain without help of this revelation of him by Christ; but if we would know him in his living personality, know him as a God not afar off, but near at hand, know him in all the richness and fulness of his mercy and love, know him as a pitying, forgiving, protecting, providing, comforting, reconciled Father, we must get at that knowledge through Christ; we must see him as the Son reveals him. No man knoweth thus the Father, but he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

But who is he to whom this revelation of the Father is offered? Let the broad unrestricted invitation with which the statement of the Saviour is immediately succeeded supply the answer: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This invitation loses half its meaning, taken out of the connection in which it was spoken. We understand and appreciate the fulness and richness of its significance only by looking upon it as grounded on and flowing out of what Christ had the moment before been saying. At first sight it might seem as if there was something like confinement and contraction in the preceding utterances of Jesus. He claims all things as committed to him. Otherwise than through him nothing

can come to us. He tells us that for all true knowledge of the Father we must be indebted exclusively to him. As to our knowing and receiving, does this not seem to narrow the channel of their conveyance? Yes, as this channel lies outside our earth, spanning the mysterious distance between it and heaven; but watch as this channel touches the earth and spreads out its waters on every side, then see how all narrowness and contraction disappear. "All things are delivered unto me of my Father." But why so delivered, why put so exclusively into his hand? Simply and solely that they might so easily, so freely, so fully come unto ours. For us to go elsewhere than to him, to expect that otherwise than through him we are to receive any thing, is to resist and repudiate this ordinance of the Father. But he has all, he holds all as the Treasurer of the kingdom, the Steward of the divine mercies, the sinner's divinely constituted Trustee, and he has all and holds all under the condition that there shall be the freest, most unrestricted, most gracious dispensing of all the treasures committed to his custody, that whoever asks shall get, that no needy one shall ever come to him and be sent unrelieved away. "No man knoweth the Father but he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." But does he niggardly withhold that revelation, or restrict it to a few? No; wide as the world is, of all who seek to know the Father that knowing him they may have peace, so wide is the unlimited invitation spread. In many a sublime attractive position do we see Jesus standing while executing his gracious office here on earth—in none loftier or more divine than when placing himself in the centre of the wide circle of humanity, and, looking round upon the burdened millions of our race with the full consciousness of one who has the power to relieve all who come, he says: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Rest—this is what our inward nature most deeply needs; for everywhere, in every region of it—in our intellect, our conscience, our affections, our will—the spirit of unrest, like a possessing demon, haunts us with its disturbing presence. Then let us see how Christ would have us bring these vexed souls of ours to him, that from every such haunted region of it he may cast the vexing demon out.

Our intellect, in its search after God, is in unrest, reëchoing the ancient plaint, "Oh that I knew where I might find him! . . . Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him." There dawns upon us the sublime idea of a Being infinitely wise and just and good, author of all, and ordered of all but through the clouds and

darkness with which his guidance and government of this world are so densely swathed we begin to lose sight of him. Looking at him as revealed alone in the ways of his providence, we get perplexed as we look around upon a world in which such oppressions, wrongs, injustices are done, where might so often triumphs over right, where sin and misery so fearfully abound, where death comes in to close the short-lived, chequered scene of every earthly life. Faith begins to lose its footing; now believing and now doubting, now all things clear, now all things clouded, restlessly we are tossed as on a troubled sea. What we want is some firm ground for our faith in God to rest on. Jesus Christ supplies that ground in revealing this God to us as our Father, in telling us that such as he himself was, in love and pity and care and help to all around him, such is the God and Father of us all to the whole human family. In our anxiety to get one true clear sight of that great Being whose doings we contemplate with such a mixture of awe and of uncertainty, we are ready with Philip to say: "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." The answer comes from the lips of Jesus, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." It is a Father of whose love we have the earthly image in the love of Christ, who rules the world we live in. Can we doubt any longer that wisdom, mercy, justice, and love shall direct the whole train of the administration of human affairs, the whole treatment of each individual of our race?

There is unrest in the conscience. A wounded conscience who can bear? The sense of guilt as it rises within the breast who can quench? The dark forebodings that it generates who can clear away? Men tell us our fears are idle; we try to believe them, and put our foot upon those fears to tread them down, but they spring up afresh beneath our tread. They tell us that God is too merciful—too kind to punish. We try to believe them, knowing that God is a thousand-fold milder, more merciful than thought of ours can conceive; but we have only to look within and around us upon the sufferings that sin inflicts, and the vision of a Divinity that does not, will not punish, vanishes like a dream of the night. Where then can our conscience-troubled spirits find repose, where but in Him who hath taken our sin upon him, in whom there is redemption for us through his blood, even the forgiveness of all our sins? If we may go to Christ for any thing, it is for this forgiveness. If among the things that have been delivered unto him of the Father, there be one that more clearly and conspicuously than another is held out to be taken at once from his most gracious hand, it is the pardon, the peace, the reconciliation



with God, offered to us in him. If we put these aside, or will not take them as the fruits of our Lord's passion, death, and righteousness, purchased for us at that great cost to him, gratuitously bestowed on us, then if the higher instincts of our moral and spiritual nature become in any degree quickened, what a weary, toilsome, fruitless task do they set us to execute. These instincts tell us that we are the creatures of another's hand, the dependants on another's bounty, the subjects of another's rule, that to him our first duties are owing, that against him our greatest offences have been committed, that to stand well with him is the first necessity of our being. How then shall we remedy the evil of our past ingratitude and disobedience, how shall we bring things right and keep things right between us and God? Oh! if all the anxious thought, and weary labors, the prayers, the pains, the self-restraints, the self-mortifications, the offerings at all the altars, the giving to all the priests, the sacrifices—personal, domestic, social, of affections, of property, of life—that have been made by mankind to turn away the apprehended wrath of heaven, and to work themselves into something like favor with the powers of the invisible world; if they could be all brought together and heaped up in one great mass before us, what a mountain-pile of toil and suffering would they exhibit, what a gigantic monument to the sense of sin, the power of conscience in the human heart. With a most mournful eye we look upon that pile as we remember that it has been heaped up needlessly and in vain, that all that was wanted was the ceasing on the part of those engaged in it from the effort to establish a righteousness of their own before God, the ceasing to revert to any such methods to ward off the displeasure or to win the favor of the Most High, the ceasing to repair to such harbors of refuge as churches, altars and priests: and the opening simply of the ear to the words of Jesus, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

There is unrest in our affections. Here they foolishly wander, and there they are bitterly checked; ever seeking, never finding full, allowed, complacent rest. And why? Because nowhere here on earth can a being or object be found on which we can safely, innocently, abidingly lavish the whole wealth of that affection which the heart contains. For the right-placing, the full outdrawing, the perfect and the permanent repose of the heart, we want one to love—above us, so that reverence may mingle with esteem; like us, so that closely and familiarly we may embrace—one in whom all conceivable excellences meet and centre, all that the eye covets to admire, that the heart asks to love. We seek for such a one in vain till we

hear Jesus saying, "Come unto me, and *I* will give you rest." We go, and all, and more than all we asked for or could think of, we find in him. Grace and truth blended in perfect harmony, a beauty undimmed by a single blemish, a sympathy constant and entire, a love eternal, unchangeable, which nothing can quench, from which nothing can separate us. Here at last, and here only, do we find one wishing to be loved and worthy to be loved with the full devotion of the heart. Restless till it lights on him, with what a warm embrace, when it finds him, does the heart of faith clasp Jesus to its bosom! "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" may the watchman of the city say. The answer is at hand: 'My beloved is the chief among ten thousand; he is altogether lovely. I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine—my Lord, my God, my Shepherd, Saviour, Kinsman, Brother, Friend.'

There is unrest in the will. It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. It aims at, it attempts independence. We would be our own masters; we will not have another to reign over us; and so, instead of the quiet of a settled order, there is confusion and anarchy within. All, indeed, is not left absolutely loose, unreined, unregulated. A yoke of some kind we all are born under or willingly take on. Some assume the yoke of a single passion of their nature, and if that passion be a strong one, such as covetousness, it is not long ere it turns the man into a slave, making him a mere beast of burden—time for nothing, care for nothing, taste for nothing, joy in nothing but in working for it and under it. And the more work is done for it, the more does it impose. Nor does it mend the matter much if, instead of one there be many such yokes about the neck, jostling one another, fretting and galling the wearer by the force and variety of the impulses that drive him in this direction and in that. It is to all mankind as bearers of the one yoke or the many that Jesus says, 'Take up my yoke, throw off these others, the yoke of pride, of covetousness, of sensuality, of worldliness, of ambition, of self-indulgence—take on that yoke which consists in devotedness to me and to duty, in a life of self-restraint, in a struggle with all that is evil, a cultivation of all that is beautiful and good and holy. A hard yoke you may think this to be, but believe me, my yoke is easy, my burden is light, easier and lighter far than those you are groaning under.'

One great reason why we are unconscious of the comparative lightness and easiness of this yoke of the Christian discipleship is, that we take it on in the spirit of fear, and of a selfish, mercenary hope, rather than with that trust and love and gratitude which are the soft wrappings which, laid beneath it, make it so easy to be borne.

It is as those who have been redeemed to God by Christ's most precious blood, whose sins have been all forgiven them for Jesus' sake, whose peace has been made with God through him ; it is in the spirit of child-like confidence, looking up to God as 'our Father in heaven, and to himself as having ready in his hand for us the grace and strength we need, that Jesus would have us meet every duty, face every temptation, endure every trial of the Christian life. But if instead of this it be with a doubtful mind and a divided heart that we put forth the hand to take on the yoke—if we do this, not so much to render a return for a great benefit already received as to add to our chance of receiving that benefit hereafter—if it be for peace and not from peace, for life and not from life that we are working—what is this but trying without throwing it off to shift the old yoke of self a little, to loosen some of its fastenings, and by their help try to attach to us the new yoke of Christ? Is it wonderful that, encumbered thus, there should be little freedom of motion, little capacity for and little enjoyment of the work of faith and labor of love? If we desire to know how truly easy the yoke of Jesus is, let us first enter into the rest that at once and in full measure he gives to all who come to him—the rest of forgiveness, peace, acceptance with God. And then, animated and strengthened by the possession and enjoyment of this rest, let us assume the yoke, that in the bearing of it we may enter into the further rest that there is for us in him—the rest of a meek and lowly heart, gentle, resigned, contented, patient of wrong, submissive under suffering, a rest not given at once or in full measure to any ; to possess which we must be ready to enter into the spirit of the following verses :

“Fain would I my Lord pursue,  
 Be all my Saviour taught ;  
 Do as Jesus bade me do,  
 And think as Jesus thought.  
 But 't is Thou must change my heart ;  
 The perfect gift must come from Thee.  
 Meek Redeemer, now impart  
 Thine own humility.

“Lord, I cannot, must not rest  
 Till I thy mind obtain ;  
 Chase presumption from my breast,  
 And all thy mildness gain.  
 Give me, Lord, thy gentle heart ;  
 Thy lowly mind my portion be ;  
 Meek Redeemer, now impart  
 Thine own humility.”

## VII.

## THE WOMAN WHO WAS A SINNER.\*

COMING, as it does in the narrative of St. Luke, (the only evangelist who records it,) immediately after that discourse which closed with the invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," how natural the thought that here, in what is told us about the woman who was a sinner, we have one instance—perhaps the first that followed its delivery—of that invitation being accepted—of one wearied and heavy laden coming to Jesus, and entering into the promised rest. Multitudes had already come to him to get their bodily ailments cured: she may have been the first who came under the pressure of a purely spiritual impulse—grieving, desiring, hoping, loving, to get all and more than all she sought.

Jesus has accepted the invitation of a Pharisee, and reclines, leaning upon his left arm, his head toward the table, his unsandalled feet stretched outwards. Through the crowd of guests and servants and spectators, a woman well known in the city for the profligate life she had been leading, glides nearer and nearer, till she stands behind him. As she stands she weeps. The tears fall thickly upon his feet. She has nothing else with which to do it, so she stoops and wipes the tears away with her loose dishevelled hair. She gently grasps the feet of Jesus to kiss them, and now she remembers the box she had brought, in hope, perhaps, to find some fitting opportunity of pouring its contents upon his head; but she can make no nearer approach, and so she sheds the precious perfumed ointment on those feet which she had washed with her tears, wiped with the hairs of her head, and covered with the kisses of her lips.

What has brought this woman here? what moves her to act in this way to Jesus. Somewhere, somehow Jesus had recently crossed her path. She had heard his calls to repentance, his offers of forgiveness, his promises of peace and rest. The arrow had entered into her soul. She stood ashamed and confounded. Her iniquities took hold of her so that she was not able to look up, yet deep within her heart new hopes were rising, dimly before her eye new prospects dawned. All the penitence she experienced, all the new desires, expectations, resolutions, that were filling her breast she owed to him—to the gentle and loving, yet resolute and truthful spirit in which



Jesus had spoken. She had looked at him, had listened to him, had followed him as he opened those arms of his mercy so widely, and invited all to come to him. And what he so fully offered—the peace of forgiveness, the blessedness of meekness and lowliness, of poverty of spirit, purity of heart—these are what she now, above all things, desired to have. Believing that she can get them alone from him, an irresistible attraction draws her to him. Jewish women were wont to honor, by one or other mark of favor shown, the Rabbi or teacher to whom they felt most attached or indebted. But what shall she render unto One who has already quickened her to a new life of hope and love? She hears of his going to dine with the Pharisee. Too well she knows how this man and his guests will look upon her, what an act of effrontery on her part it will appear that she should obtrude her presence into such a dwelling at such a time. But faith makes her bold, love triumphs over fear. She presses in and on, till at last she finds herself bending over the feet of Jesus, with the costliest thing she has, the alabaster box of ointment, in her hand. As she stands behind that form, as she stoops to embrace those feet, all the thoughtlessness, the recklessness, the unrestrained self-indulgence of past years, the ties she had broken, the injuries she had done, the reproaches she had incurred, the sins that she had committed, flash upon her memory. Who is she, that she should come so near and touch so familiarly the pure and holy Jesus? She cannot meet his eye, she does not press herself upon his notice. But is he not the meek and compassionate, as well as the pure and the holy One? While others had frowned upon her, avoided her, discarded her, treated her as an outcast, had he not shown a deep and tender interest in her, a yearning over her to take her in his hand and lead her back to the paths of purity and peace? It was this kindly treatment that had broken down all power to resist upon her part, which had given him such a hold upon her, which had brought her to the house of the Pharisee to see him, which had drawn her so close to him. But the very thought of all the love and pity that he had shown to her and to all sinners opens afresh the fountains of shame and self-reproach, and the tears of a true and deep repentance flow forth; not the tears of bare self-condemnation—a stinging remorse goading the spirit to despair. Along with a true sense of her sin there is an apprehension of the Divine mercy—that mercy revealed to her in Jesus. She sorrows not over her sins as one who has no hope: a trust in Christ's readiness and power to pardon and to save her has already entered into her heart. The very sense, however, of his exceeding graciousness quickens the sense of her ex-

ceeding sinfulness. The faith and hope to which she has been begotten intensify her penitence, and that penitence intensifies her love; so that as we look upon her—first standing silently weeping, then bending down and bathing those feet with her tears, then clasping and kissing them and pouring the rich ointment over them—she presents herself to our eye as the most striking picture of a loving, humble penitent at the feet of Jesus which the gospels present.

It was with a very different sentiment from that with which we are disposed to look at her that she was looked at by the Pharisee who presided at the feast. He had noticed her entrance, watched her movements, seen that, though not turning round to speak to her, Jesus was not unconscious of her presence, was permitting her to wash and wipe and anoint his feet. For the woman he has nothing but indignation and contempt. He thinks only of what she had been, not of what she is; and his only wonder as to her is, how she could have presumed to enter here and act as she has been doing. But he wonders also at Jesus. He cannot be the prophet that so many take him to be, or he would have known what kind of woman this was; for he could not have known that and yet allowed himself to be defiled with her touch. Whatever respect he had been prepared to show to Jesus begins to suffer loss, as he sees him allowing such familiarities to be practised by such hands. Not that this respect had ever been very spiritual or very profound. The omissions that our Lord notices—notice not so much in the way of complaint as for the purpose of bringing out the contrast between the treatment given by the two—Simon and the woman—would seem rather to imply that he had not been careful to show any particular regard to his guest. Perhaps he thought that he was paying such a compliment to Jesus in inviting him to his house that he need be the less attentive to the courtesies of his reception. It was a rare thing for a man like him—a Pharisee—to do such a thing. Simon, however, was not one of the strict and rigid, the religious devotees of his order; he was more a moralist than a pietist; and seeing much in Jesus to approve, and even admire, he was quite ready to ask him to his house, in the hope, perhaps, that in the easy freedom of social intercourse he might test the pretensions of this new teacher and see farther than others into his true character and claims. One mark or token of his order is deeply stamped upon this Simon—pride—a pride, it may have been, a little different from that of the Pharisee whom Jesus represents in the parable as praising himself before God for his fasting twice in the week and giving tithes of all that he possessed, yet quite akin to his in comparing himself with and despising

others. He too might have stood and prayed thus with himself. "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or as this woman here." Any thing like contact, concert, familiar intercourse with such a low, abandoned woman, no man who had any proper self-respect, he thinks, could practise or endure. And now that he sees Jesus consenting to be touched and handled by her, his only explanation of it is that he cannot know what kind of woman she is. "Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him." Luke 7:39.

In thinking and feeling so, he entirely overlooks the change that had taken place—the evidence of which appeared in the very manner of the woman's present conduct, and above all the nature and strength of the tie which that change created between her and Jesus. It was to lift him out of this deep abyss of pride, and if possible to show him how much closer, deeper, tenderer a relationship it was in which this penitent stood to him, than that in which he, Simon, stood, that Jesus stated the case of the two debtors: "And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most. Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou has rightly judged."

As little as David saw the drift of Nathan's parable of the little ewe lamb, so little did Simon at first perceive the drift of the one now addressed to himself, and so he promptly answers, "I suppose that it would be he to whom he forgave most." Out of his own mouth he stands convicted. It would be straining the short parable in this instance spoken by our Lord if we took it as strictly and literally representing the relative positions before God in which Simon and the woman stood, or as intimating that both had been actually forgiven, the one as much more than the other as five hundred exceeds fifty pence. It is not so much the amount actually owed as that known and felt by the debtors to be owing, and their conscious inability to meet in any way the payment, that supplies the groundwork of our Lord's application of the supposititious case. "And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thy house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of

her head. Thou gavest me no kiss : but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint : but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven ; for she loved much : but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." "Thou hast been watching, Simon, all that this woman has been doing, but what is the true explanation of her conduct, the explanation that vindicates at once her conduct to me and my conduct to her ? Why is it that she has been showing me marks of respect and strong personal attachment, contrasting so with those that you have shown, or rather have omitted to show ? She has done so because she loves so much ; and she loves so much, because she has had so much forgiven. It is but little compared with her that you feel you owe, but little that you can be forgiven ; but little, therefore, that you love.' In speaking to him thus, how forbearingly, how leniently did the Lord deal with Simon ; how much more leniently and forbearingly we may be apt to think than he deserved, or than his case warranted. But it was so in every case with our divine Master, ever seeking the good of those he dealt with—striving by the gentle insinuations of his grace to win his way into their consciences and hearts, rather than by a full display of all their guilt or stern denunciation of it. If in this instance he was successful, if Simon's eyes were opened to discern in the two debtors himself and the woman, and in the creditor to whom all their debts were due none other than He who was sitting at his table, what a wonderful revolution in his estimate of Jesus must have taken place ; for nothing in this whole narrative strikes so much as the simple, natural, easy, unostentatious manner in which Jesus assumes to himself the position of that Being to whom all spiritual debts are owing, and by whom they are forgiven.

"Her sins," said Jesus of the woman to Simon, "which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much." So to interpret this saying of the Saviour as to make the loving the ground of the forgiveness would be to contradict both the letter and spirit of the preceding parable, in which the love is represented as flowing out of the forgiveness, and not the forgiveness as flowing out of the love—Jesus points to ~~the~~ love not as the spring but as the evidence of the forgiveness—to the strength of the one as indicating the extent of the other.

When Christ said so emphatically to the Pharisee, "Simon, I have somewhat to say to thee," the attention of the woman must have been for the moment diverted from her own case and directed to the colloquy that followed, the more so as it seemed at first to have no



reference to her. But when he turned, and looking on her for the first time, said, "Seest thou this woman?" into what a strange tumult of emotion must she have been thrown, all eyes on her—the contrast between her attentions and love to Jesus and those of Simon drawn out in particular after particular by our Lord himself, all closed by her hearing him declare, "Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven." The desire, the hope of pardon, had already dawned upon her heart. She had trusted in the divine mercy as revealed to her in Jesus, and already experienced the relief and comfort this trust was fitted to impart. Her faith, however, was yet imperfect; her sense, her assurance of forgiveness not relieved from uncertainty and doubt; but now from the lips of the Lord himself she hears the fact announced that her sins had been forgiven; and, as if that were not enough—as if he would do every thing that word of his could do to seal the assurance on her heart—Jesus turns to her and says, "*Thy sins are forgiven.*" Fear takes wings and flies away; doubt can find no more room within; the sins without number of all her bygone life rush out of sight into the depths of that sea into which Jesus casts them. Not ceasing to be penitent, more penitent than ever, the bowed-down spirit is lifted up as the full blessedness enters and possesses it of one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

"*Thy sins are forgiven thee.*" Was it in wonder and with an awe like that of men who feel themselves in the presence of One in whom the most peculiar prerogative of the Divinity resides, or was it in hatred and with contempt of him as an arrogant, presumptuous blasphemer, that those around the table began to say to themselves, "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" Whatever their state of mind was as to himself, Jesus does not lay it bare, nor stop to expose or correct it. But there was one mistake that they might make as to the forgiveness he had pronounced. They might imagine it to have been capriciously or arbitrarily dispensed; they might fail to trace its connection with the spiritual condition of her upon whom it was bestowed; if not dis severing it from its source in him, they might dissociate it from its channel, the faith in him which she had cherished. Even she herself, after what had been said, might be disposed to attach the forgiveness to the love, rather than the love to the forgiveness, overlooking the common root of both in that faith which brought her to Jesus, and taught her to cast her confidence alone and undividedly on him. Therefore his last word, as he dismisses her, is, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." In peace she goes, silently as she had entered; not a single word throughout

escaping from her lips, her heart at first too full of humiliation, grief, and shame, now too full of joy and gratitude. In peace she goes, light for ever after on her heart the reproach that man might cast upon her—the Christ-given peace the keeper of her mind and heart. She goes to hide herself from our view, her name and all her after-history unknown. The faith and traditions of western Christendom have indeed identified her with Mary of Magdala, and assigned to her a place among those women who ministered to the Lord of their substance, who were admitted to close and familiar intercourse with him in Galilee, and who were privileged to be the last attendants on the cross and first visitors of the sepulchre. We will not presume to say how far the former life of the penitent woman would have interfered with her occupying such a position; we will not allude to the difficulty that will occur as you try to imagine what substance she could have had, or whence derived, out of which she could minister to Jesus. Neither shall we dwell upon the fact that out of Mary of Magdala seven devils had been cast, a possession not necessarily implying any former criminality of life, yet apparently quite inconsistent with the kind of life that this woman had been leading. Enough, that when Mary, called Magdalene, is first mentioned, as she is in the opening verses of the next chapter in St. Luke's gospel, she is introduced as a new person, not amid scenes then, nor at any time thereafter, that in any way connect her with the woman that had been a sinner. It is true that, while there is the absence of all evidence in favor of their identification, there is the absence also of evidence sufficient positively to disprove it. In these circumstances it may be grateful to many to trace in the narrative now before us the earlier history of one so loved, and honored afterwards by Jesus, as was Mary of Magdala. Much more grateful we owe to us is the belief that this penitent, whose broken heart was so tenderly up-bounded—having got the healing from his gentle, loving hands—from that notoriety into which her sin had raised her, retired voluntarily into an obscurity so deep that her name and her dwelling-place, and all her after-story, lie hidden from our sight.

The forgiveness so graciously conveyed to this nameless penitent is equally needed by all of us, is offered to us all—Christ is as willing to bestow it upon each of us as ever he was to bestow it upon her. The manner of our possession and enjoyment of this gift depends upon the manner in which we deal with the tender of it made to us by him. We may keep it for ever hanging at a distance out before us, a thing desired or hoped for, now with more and now with less eagerness and expectancy, according to the changing temper of our

mind and heart. But we might have, we ought to have, this blessing now in hand as our present, full, secure, peace-giving possession. And not till it thus be ours, not till the hand of faith shall grasp and hold it as ours in Christ, ours through our oneness with him in whom we have redemption through his blood, even this very forgiveness of our sins ; not till we exchange the vague and general and vacillating hope for the firm yet humble trust which appropriates at once in its full measure this rich benefit of our Lord's life and death for us ; not till the comforting sense that our sins have been forgiven visits and cheers our heart, can we love our Saviour as he should be loved, and as he wishes to be loved by us. It is when we know how much it is that we have owed, and how much it is that we have been forgiven, that the bond gets closest that binds us to him—a complex, ever-growing, ever-tightening bond, the more that is forgiven ever revealing more that needs forgiveness ; with us as with this woman, as with all true believers, the humility, the penitence, the faith, the love, the peace that all accompany or flow forth from the granted forgiveness, all intensifying each other, all leading us more simply, more entirely, more habitually, more confidently to Christ, for mercy to pardon and grace to help us in every time of need.



## VIII.

THE COLLISION WITH THE PHARISEES—THE FIRST PARABLES—THE STILLING OF THE TEMPEST—THE DEMONIAC OF GADARA.\*

OUR Lord's second circuit through Galilee, if not more extensive, was more public and formal than the first. He was now constantly attended by the twelve men whom he had chosen out of the general company of his followers, while certain women, Mary, Joanna, Susanna, and many others, some of them of good position, waited on him, ministering to him of their substance. The crowds that gathered round him wherever he went ; the wonder, joy and gratitude with which his miracles, particularly those recent ones of raising the dead, were hailed ; the impression his discourses had created, and the steps that he had now obviously taken towards organizing a distinct body of disciples, fanned into an open flame the long-smouldering

\* Matt. 12 : 22-50 ; 13 ; 8 : 23-34 ; Mark 3 : 22-30 ; 4 ; 5 : 1-20 : Luke 11 : 14-54 ; 8 : 22-39.

fire of Pharisaic opposition. The Pharisees of Galilee may not at first have been as quick and deep in their resentment as were their brethren of Jerusalem, neither had they the same kind of instruments in their hands to employ against him. But their resentment grew as the profound discord between the whole teaching and life of Jesus and their own more fully developed itself, and it was zealously fostered by a deputation that came down from the capital. It had already once and again broken out, as when they had charged him with being a Sabbath-breaker and a blasphemer. On these occasions Jesus had satisfied himself with rebuking on the spot the men by whom the charges had been preferred. But he had not yet broken with the Pharisees as a party, nor denounced them either privately to his disciples or publicly to the multitude. But now, at the close of his second circuit through Galilee, after nearly a year's labor bestowed upon that province, the collision came, and the whole manner of his speech and action towards them was changed.

Early in the forenoon of one of his longest and most laborious days in Capernaum, there was brought to him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb. Blindness and dumbness, whether springing from original organic defect or induced by disease, he had often before cured. But here, underlying both, was the deeper spiritual malady of possession. Jesus cast the devil out, and the immediate effect of the dispossession was the recovery of the powers of speech and vision. There must have been something peculiar in the case. Perhaps it lay in this, that whereas dumbness in all ordinary cases springs either from congenital deafness or from some defect in the organs of speech, it was due here to neither of these causes. The man could hear as well as others, and once he had spoken as well as they. But from the time the devil entered he had been tongue-tied, had tried to speak but could not. A new and horrible kind of dumbness had come upon him, the closing of his lips by an inward constraint that, struggle as he might, he could not overcome. St. Luke speaks only of the dumbness, as if in it more than in the blindness lay the peculiarity of the case. Luke 11:14. St. Matthew records another instance of the ejection of a devil from one who was dumb, in which the same effect followed; the dumb speaking as soon as the devil was cast out. Matt. 9:33. It is at least very remarkable that it was in connection with this class of cases only that the double result appeared, of an extraordinary commotion among the people and an extraordinary allegation put forward by the Pharisees.

The casting out of devils had been one of the earliest and most common of our Lord's miracles; always carefully distinguished by



the evangelists from the healing of ordinary diseases; awakening generally not more wonder, perhaps not so much, as some of the bodily cures. If the testimony of Josephus is to be credited, demoniac possession was common at this period, and exorcism by the Jews themselves not unfrequent. But when a dumb devil was cast out, and instantly the man began to speak, we are told that in one instance "the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel;" (Matt. 9:33;) and in another, "All the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the Son of David?" Matt. 12:23. Here almost for the first time was an open expression of faith in Jesus as the Messiah, who was known and spoken of all over Judea as the Son of David. Whatever his words and actions might have implied, Jesus had not publicly taken this title to himself—claimed to be the Messiah; but now the people of themselves begin to think that it must be so—that by none other than he could works like these be done. The man whose character the Pharisees had been attempting to malign, whose influence with the people they had been doing their utmost to undermine, is not only hailed as a teacher sent from God, but as a prophet, nay, more than a prophet, the very Son of David. What is to be said and done? The facts of the case they do not, they cannot deny. That the man's dumbness had been nothing but a common dumbness, that there had been no evil spirit in him to be cast out of him, they do not venture to suggest. Those ingenious scribes that have come down from Jerusalem can see but one way out of the difficulty. They do not hesitate to suggest it, nor their friends beside them to adopt it; and so they go about the crowd that is standing lost in wonder, saying contemptuously, "This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." A winebibber, a gluttonous man, a friend of publicans and sinners, a Sabbath-breaker, a blasphemer, they had called him, but here is the last and vilest thing that calumny can say of him—that he is in league with Satan, and that it is to his connection with the devil, and to that alone, that he owes all his wisdom and his power. How does Jesus meet this calumny? How does he speak of and to the men who were guilty of forging and circulating it? They were busy among the crowd secretly propagating the slander, but they must not think that he was unconscious or careless of what they were saying of him. He calls them unto him, (Mark 3:23,) and they come. His accusers and he stand forth before the assembled multitude, fairly confronted. First, in the simplest, plainest manner, obviously for the sake of convincing any of the simple-minded people who might be ready to adopt this new solution of the secret of his power, he exposes its foolish-



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ness and injustice. There was, he assumes, a prince of the devils, who had a kingdom of his own, opposed to the kingdom of God. That kingdom of darkness might admit of much internal discord, but in one thing it was and must ever be united—in its antagonism to the kingdom of light. No more than any other kingdom, or city, or house, could it stand, were it, in that respect, divided against itself. Yet it was such kind of division that these Pharisees were attributing to it. Their own sons undertook to cast out devils: was it by Beelzebub that they did it? If not, why cast the imputation of doing so upon him? None but a strong one could enter the house of the human spirit, as the devil was seen to enter it in these cases of possession. It must be a stronger than he who binds him, and casts him forth, and strips him of all his spoils. This was what they had just seen Jesus do; and if he, by the mighty power of God, had done so, then no doubt the kingdom was come unto them—come in his person, his teaching, his work. He—Jesus—stood now the visible head and representative of the kingdom, in the midst of them. To come to him was to enter that kingdom—to be with him was to be on the side of that kingdom: and such was its nature, such the claims he made, that there could be no neutrality, no middle ground to be occupied. He that was not with him was against him; he that gathered not with him was scattering abroad. Much there was in the spirit and conduct of many then before him whom the application of this test must bring in as guilty; but let them know that all manner of sin and blasphemy might be forgiven. In ignorance and unbelief they might speak against the Son of man, and yet not put themselves beyond the pale of mercy; but in presence of that Divine spirit and power in which he spake and acted, not only to ignore it, but to misrepresent and malign it, as these Pharisees had done, was to enter upon a path of wilful, perverse resistance to the Spirit of God, which, if pursued, would land the men who took and followed it in a guilt for which there would be no forgiveness, either here or hereafter; no forgiveness, not because any kind or degree of guilt could exhaust the divine mercy or exceed its power, but because the pursuers of such a path, sooner or later, would reach such a state of mind, and heart, and habit, that all chance or hope of their ever being disposed to fulfil, or capable of fulfilling, those conditions upon which alone mercy is or can be dispensed, would vanish away. The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which never hath forgiveness, lies not in any single word or deed. Jesus, though not obscurely hinting that in the foul calumny that had been uttered there lay the elements of the unpardonable offence, does not distinctly say that the men before



him never would or could be forgiven for uttering it. His words are words of warning rather than of judgment. A monstrous accusation had been made, one in which if the men who had made it persevered, they would be displaying thereby the very temper and spirit of such blasphemy against the Holy Ghost as never could be forgiven. It was out of an evil heart that the evil word had been spoken. It was by a corrupt tree that this corrupt fruit had been borne, and the heart would get worse, the tree more rotten, unless now made better. Such bitter words of ungodly malice and despite as the Pharisees had spoken, were but outward indices of the state of things within. Yet such good signs were words in general, that "Verily," said Jesus, "I say unto you. . . . By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

The men whom Jesus thus publicly rebuked—characterizing them as a generation of vipers—for the moment were silenced. Some of their party, however, now interposed. Jesus had unequivocally asserted that his works had been wrought by none other than the mighty power of God. Let Him prove this as Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Elijah had done. The works themselves were not enough to do this. The popular belief was that demons and false gods could work signs on earth. It was the true God only who could give signs from heaven. Such a sign they had asked Christ to show. Luke 9:16. "The people gathered thick together," we are told, to hear Christ's answer; but, as at other times when the same demand was made, our Lord would point to no other sign than that of the most remarkable foreshadowing in Old Testament times of his own resurrection from the dead. This allusion to the extraordinary incident in the history of Jonas was doubly unsatisfactory to his hearers. It was no sign from above, but rather one from below. It was a sign of that of which they had as yet no conception—in which they had no faith—it carried with it to them no additional or confirmatory evidence. No other sign, however, was to be given to a generation which was acting worse than the heathen inhabitants of Nineveh, the Gentile queen of the south; a greater than Jonas, a greater than Solomon was among them, yet they despised his wisdom and would not repent at his call. A brighter light than had ever dawned upon them was now shining—nay, was set up conspicuously for them to behold it; but there must be an eye within to see, as well as a light without to look at, before any true illumination can take place. And if that eye be evil—be in any way incapacitated for true discernment, whatever the external effulgence be, the body remains full of darkness. Even such a darkness was now settling over a people who were going to present

but too sad a type of what was sometimes seen in cases of demoniac possession, when an unclean spirit, for a time cast out, returned with seven other spirits more wicked than itself. From among the Jewish people, from and after the Babylonish captivity, the old demon of idolatry had been ejected. For a time the house had been swept and garnished, but now a sevenfold worse infatuation was coming upon this generation, to drive it on to a deadlier catastrophe.

The exciting intelligence that in the presence of a vast multitude Jesus had been accused by the Pharisees of being nothing else than an emissary and ally of the devil; that, not satisfied with defending himself against the charge, he had in turn become their accuser, and broken out into the most open and unrestrained denunciation of their whole order; that the feud which for months past had been secretly gathering strength had ended at last in an open rupture, was carried to the house in which Mary and the Lord's brothers were dwelling. A fatal thing it seems to them for him to have plunged into such a deadly strife with the most powerful party in the country. They will try what they can to draw him out of it. They hasten to the spot, and find the crowd so large, the press so great, that they cannot get near him. They send their message in to him. "Behold," says one who is standing next to Jesus, "thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee." A mother who, if fond enough, was yet so fearful, who once before had tried to dictate to him, and had been checked at Cana; brethren who thought that he was beside himself, none of whom as yet believed on him—what right had they to interrupt him at his work—to move him from his purpose? "Who is my mother?" said he to the man who conveyed to him the message, "and who are my brethren?" Then pausing, looking "round about on them which sat about him," stretching forth his hands towards his disciples, "Behold," he exclaimed, "my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." A woman in the crowd, who has been standing lost in a mere human admiration of him, hears his mother spoken of, and cannot in the fulness of her womanly emotion but call her blessed. "Yea, rather blessed," said Jesus to her, "are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."

So, when in the very heart of his mission-work on earth they spake to him about the closest human ties, his nearest earthly relatives—close as these were, and willing as he was in their own mode and sphere to acknowledge them, so resolutely did Jesus waive them aside, so sublimely did he rise above them, setting himself forth as the Elder Brother of that whole family in heaven and earth named

by his name, and who are followers in the footsteps of Him who came not to do his own will, but the will of Him that sent him. The earthly and the heavenly bonds, the common and the Christian ties, do not always coincide, neither are they always in harmony. If ever they interfere—if mother, or brother, or sister, or dearest friend should once tempt us away from him in nearness to whom standeth our eternal life—then let us remember the scene in Capernaum, and ask our Lord to give us of his own Spirit, here as everywhere to follow him.

Jesus did not go out to his mother and brethren when they sent for him, did not go even to their house when fatigue and exhaustion called for a brief repose. He rather accepted the invitation of a Pharisee to take a hurried repast in a neighboring dwelling, the multitude waiting meanwhile for him without. In haste to resume his work, and knowing withal that it was no friendly company he was asked to join, Jesus went in and sat down at once, neglecting the customary ablutions. The host and his friends were not slow to notice the neglect, nor was he slow to notice the sentence against him they were passing in their hearts. The men around him here were part of that very band whose vile imputation of confederacy with Satan had already released his lips from all restraint, and called for and vindicated his addressing them as he had done. Nor does he alter now his tone. We may not, indeed, believe that all which St. Luke, in the latter half of the eleventh chapter of his gospel, records as spoken by him—the woe after woe pronounced upon the Pharisees and the lawyers—was uttered indoors, as soon as he had seated himself at the table. Knowing how usual a thing it is with the three synoptical evangelists to bring together into one discourse sentences that were uttered at different times and upon different occasions, we are inclined rather to believe that the greater part of it was spoken after the hasty meal was over, and Jesus stood once more the centre of a vast concourse, with scribes and Pharisees urging him vehemently, and provoking him to speak many things, lying in wait for him to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him. Luke 11:53, 54. They got this out of his mouth, that here in Galilee—a year and more before that memorable day, the last of his public ministry, when he stood within the temple and closed the exciting controversies with those terrible denunciations which St. Matthew has preserved to us in the twenty-third chapter of his gospel, in briefer and more compendious terms, the very woes that were then rolled over the heads of the Pharisees of Jerusalem, were rolled over theirs in Capernaum. A new phase of our Saviour's character—very

different from that which we had before us in his treatment of the penitent sinner—thus reveals itself to our view; his firmness, his courage, his outspokenness, the depth of his indignant recoil from, the sternness of his unmitigated condemnation of the inconsistencies, the hypocrisies, the haughtiness, the cruelty, the tyranny of the scribes and Pharisees. He had a right to speak and act towards them which none but he could have. He was their omniscient Judge; he knew that in hating him they were hating his Father also, that the spirit of persecution which they displayed sprang from a deeper source than mere personal animosity to him as a man. As no other can ever occupy the same position towards his fellow-men as that in which Jesus stood, so to no other can his conduct here be a guide or precedent. One thing only remains for us to do: to try to enter as thoroughly as we can into the entire harmony that there was between all the love and pity and gentleness and compassion that he showed towards the ignorant, the erring, the sinful who manifested the least openness to conviction, the least disposition to repent and believe, and that profound and, as we may call it, awful antipathy which he displayed to those who, built up in their spiritual pride, under the very cloak of a pretentious pietism, indulged some of the meanest and most malignant passions of our nature, wilfully shutting their eyes to the light of heaven that was shining in the midst of them, and plunging on in the darkness towards nothing short of spoken and acted blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.

But if the forenoon of this long and busy day at Capernaum was rendered remarkable by the change of attitude which Jesus assumed towards the Pharisees, its afternoon was rendered equally if not still more remarkable by the change of method in addressing the multitude. More than half of the term allotted to his ministry in Galilee had now expired. The temper of the community towards him had been fairly tried. The result was sufficiently manifest. Here beside him was a small band of followers—ignorant, yet willing to be taught; weak in faith, but strong in personal attachment. There against him was a powerful and numerous band, socially, politically, religiously the leaders of the people. Between the two lay the bulk of the common people—greatly excited by his miracles, listening with wonder and half-approval to his words, siding with him rather than against him in his conflict with the Pharisees. With them, if we looked only at external indications, we should say that he was generally and highly popular. But it was popularity of a kind that Jesus had no wish to gain, as he had no purpose to which to turn it. Behind all the show of outward attachment he saw that there was but



little discernment of his true character, but little disposition to receive and honor him as the Redeemer of mankind, but little capacity to understand the more secret things of that spiritual kingdom which it was his office to establish and extend. And as he had altered his conduct towards his secret enemies by dragging out their opposition to the light and openly denouncing them, so now he alters his conduct towards his professed friends by clothing his higher instructions to them in a new and peculiar garb. As he left the house in which the hasty mid-day meal was taken, the crowd gathered round him—increased in numbers, a keener edge put upon its curiosity by what had just occurred. Followed by this crowd, he goes down to the lake-side; finds the press of the people round about him oppressive and inconvenient, sees a boat lying in close to the beach, enters it, sits down, and, separated from them by a little strip of water, addresses the multitude that lined the shore. He speaks about a sower, and how it fared with the seed he sowed: ‘Some of it fell by the wayside, and some upon stony places, and some among thorns, and some upon good soil.’ He speaks about a field in which good seed was sown by day but tares by night, and how both grew up, and some would have them separated; but the householder to whom the field belonged would not hear of it, but would have both grow together till the harvest. He speaks of a man casting seed into his ground, and finding that by night and by day, whether he slept or woke, was watching and tending, or doing nothing about it, that seed secretly grew up, he knew not how. He speaks of the least of seeds growing up into the tallest of herbs; of the leaven working in the three measures of meal till the whole was leavened; and he tells his hearers that the kingdom of heaven is like unto each of the things that he describes. His hearers are all greatly interested, for it is about plain, familiar things of the house, the garden, the field that he speaks; and yet a strange expression of mingled surprise and perplexity sits upon every countenance. The disciples within the boat share these sentiments equally with the people upon the shore. Nothing seems easier than to understand these little stories of common life; but why has Jesus told them? What from his lips can they mean? What has the kingdom of heaven to do with them? Teaching by parables was a common way of instruction with the Jewish Rabbis. But it had not been in the first instance adopted by Christ; they had not as yet heard a single parable from his lips; and now he uses nothing else—parable follows parable, as if that were the only instrument of the teacher that Jesus cared to use. And besides the entire novelty of his employment of the parabolic method, there is that haze, that

thick obscurity which covers the real meaning of the parables he utters. The disciples take the first opportunity that offers itself of speaking to him privately, and putting to him the question, "Why speakest thou to them in parables?" A question which they would never have put but for the circumstance that they had never before known him employ this kind of discourse. Now mark the answer to the question: "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross; and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." Matt. 13:1-15.

It was partly then for the purpose of concealment that, upon this occasion, these parables were spoken. Those before whose eyes this veil was drawn had already been tried with a different kind of speech. Most important truths had been announced to them in the simplest and plainest language, but they had shut their minds and hearts against them. And now, as a righteous judgment upon them for having acted thus, these mysteries of the kingdom, which might have been presented to them in another and more transparent guise, are folded up in the concealing drapery of these parables. Speaking generally, parables are meant to make things plainer, not more obscure; and of many of our Lord's parables, such as those of the Good Samaritan, the Unjust Judge, the Pharisee and the Publican, it is true that neither by those who first heard them uttered, nor by any who have read them since, has there been the slightest doubt or uncertainty as to their meaning. But there is another and a larger class of the parables of Christ to which this description does not apply, which were not understood by those to whom they were first addressed, which may still be misunderstood, which, instead of being homely tales illustrative of the simplest moral and religious truths, the simplest moral and religious duties, are figurative descriptions, prophetic allegories, in which the true nature of Christ's spiritual kingdom, the manner of its establishment and extension, and all its after varied fortunes are portrayed. It was to this class that the

parables just spoken by our Saviour belonged. And there was mercy as well as judgment in their employment. Behind their concealing drapery bright lights were burning, the very darkness thrown around intended to stimulate the eye to a keener, steadier gaze. As his disciples had dealt with the instructions that had previously come from his lips differently from those who seeing saw not, hearing would not understand, so now Jesus deals differently with them as to the parables. They appear to have been at first as much in the dark as to their meaning as was the general audience on the shore. But they were willing, even anxious to be taught. When the cloud came down on the teachings of their Master, and these dark sayings were uttered, they longed to enter into that cloud to gaze upon the light which burned within. They came seeking, and they found; knocking, and the door was opened to them. To them it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom; but to the others, uncaring for it, unprepared for it, and unworthy of it as they were, it was not given. By a private and full explanation of the two first and leading parables, those of the sower and the tares and the wheat, Jesus put into his disciples' hands the key to all the eight parables that he delivered; taught them to see therein the first plantation of the church—the field, the world—the good seed, the word of God; the entrance and the allowed continued presence of obstruction and opposition—the silent and secret growth of God's empire over human hearts; the small enlarging into the great; its persuasive transforming power; its preciousness, whether found after diligent search or coming into the possessor's hands almost at unawares; the end of all in the gathering out of that spiritual kingdom of the Lord of all that should offend.

What was true, locally and temporarily, of the instructions of that single day, of that small section of our Lord's teaching, is true of the whole body of those disclosures of God made to us in the Bible. There are things simple and there are things obscure; things so plain that he who runs may read; things so deep that he only can understand who has within him some answering spiritual consciousness or aspiration, out of which the true interpretation springs. We must first compass the simple, if we would fathom the obscure. We must receive into honest hearts and make good use of the plainest declarations of the divine Word, if we would have that lamp kindled within us, by whose light the more recondite of its sayings can alone be understood. And if we refuse to do so, if we will not follow the course here so plainly marked out for us, if we turn our eyes from that which they could see if they would, if we stop our ears against

that which they could understand, if we follow not the heavenly lights already given so far as they can carry us, have we any right to complain if at last our feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and we look for light, and, behold, it is turned into darkness? It is in an inner, remote sanctuary, the true Shekinah, where the light of God's gracious presence still shineth, to be approached with a humble, tractable spirit, the prayer upon our lips and in our heart, "What I know not, Lord, teach thou me; I beseech thee show me thy glory." It is not in the intellect, it is in the conscience, in the heart, that the finest and most powerful organs of spiritual vision lie. There are seals that cover up many passages and pages of the Bible, which no light or fire of genius can dissolve; there are hidden riches here that no labor of mere learned research can get at and spread forth. But those seals melt like the snow-wreath beneath the warm breathings of desire and prayer, and those riches drop spontaneously into the bosom of the humble and the contrite, the poor and the needy.

Five parables appear to have been addressed by Jesus to the multitude from the boat, their delivery broken by the private explanation to the disciples of the parable of the Sower. Landing, and sending the multitude away, Jesus entered into the house. There the disciples again applied to him, and he declared unto them the parable of the Tares. Thereafter, the three shorter parables of the Treasure, the Pearl, and the Net were spoken to the disciples by themselves. The long, laborious day was now nearly over, and in the dwelling which served him as a home while in Capernaum, he might have sought and found repose. Again, however, we see him by the lake-side; again under the pressure of the multitudes. Seeking rest and seeing no hope of it for him in Capernaum, Jesus said, "Let us pass over unto the other side." That other eastern side of the lake of Galilee offered a singular contrast to the western one. Its wild and lonely hills, thinly peopled by a race, the majority of whom were Gentiles, were seldom visited by the inhabitants of the plain of Genesareth. Now-a-days both sides of the lake are desert; yet still there is but little intercourse between them. Few travellers venture to traverse the eastern shore; fewer venture far into the regions which lie behind, which are now occupied wholly by an Arab population. As offering to him in some one or other of the deep valleys which cleave its hills and run down into the sea, a shady and secure retreat for a day or two from the bustle and fatigue of his life in Galilee, Jesus proposes a passage across the lake. All is soon ready; and they hurriedly embark, taking Jesus in "even as he was," with no preparation for the voyage. It was, however, but a short



sail of six or eight miles. Night falls on them by the way, and with the night one of those terrible hurricanes by which a lake which lies so low, and is bounded on all sides by hills, is visited at times. The tempest smote the waters, the waves ran high and smote the little bark. She reeled and swayed, and at each lurch took in more and more water till she was nearly filled, and once filled, with the next wave that rolls into her she must sink. They were practised hands that navigated this boat, who knew well the lake in all its moods, not open to unreasonable fear; but now fear comes upon them, and they are ready to give up all hope. Where all this while is he at whose bidding they had embarked? They had been too busy for the time with the urgent work required by the sudden squall, to think of him; the mantle of the night's thick darkness may have hidden him from their view. But now in their extremity they seek for him, and find him "in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow." Unbroken by all the noise of winds and waves without, and all the tumult of those toiling hands within, how quiet and deep must that rest of the wearied one have been! They have some difficulty in awaking him, and they do it somewhat roughly. "Master! Master!" they cry to him, "save us! We perish! Carest thou not that we perish?" With a word of rebuke for their great fear and little faith, Jesus rises, and speaking to the boisterous elements as one might speak to a boisterous child, he says to the winds and the waves, "Peace, be still!" Nature owns at once the sovereignty of the Lord. The winds cease their blowing—the waves subside—instantly there is a great calm. Those who had sought and roused the sleeping Saviour fall back into their former places, resume their former work; at the measured stroke of their oars the little vessel glides silently over the placid waters. All quiet now, where but a few minutes before all was tumult; few words are spoken during the rest of the voyage, the rowers only whispering to each other as they rowed: "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the waves obey him?"

Jesus lying this moment under the weakness of exhausted strength, rising the next in all the might of manifested omnipotence: in close proximity, in quick succession, the humanity and the divinity that were in him exhibited themselves. Though suddenly roused to see himself in a position quite new to him, and evidently of great peril, Jesus has no fear. His first thought is not of the danger, his first word is not to the tempest, his first care is not for the safety of the body, it is for the state of the spirit of those who wake him from his slumbers; nor is it until he has rebuked their fears that he removes

the cause; but then he does so, and does it effectually, by the word of his power. And so long as the life we are living shall be thought and spoken of as a voyage, so long shall this night scene on the lake of Galilee supply the imagery by which many a passage in the history of the church, and many in the history of the individual believer, shall be illustrated. Sleeping or waking, let Christ be in the vessel and it is safe. The tempest may come, our faith be small, our fear be great, but still if in our fear we have so much faith as to cry to him to save us, still in the hour of our greatest need will he arise to our help, and though he may have to blame us for not cherishing a livelier trust and making an earlier application, he will not suffer the winds or the waves to overwhelm us.

The storm is past, the night is over, the morning dawns, the opposite coast of the Gadarenes is reached. Here, then, in these lonely places there will be some rest for Jesus, some secure repose. Not yet, not instantly. Soon as he lands, immediately, from some neighboring place of graves\* there comes forth a wild and frenzied man, a man possessed by many devils; for a long time so possessed, exceeding fierce so that no man could tame him. They had bound him with fetters and with chains; the fetters he had plucked asunder, the chains had been broken by him. Flying from the haunts of men, flinging off all his garments, the naked, howling maniac lies day and night among the tombs, crying and cutting himself with stones; so fiercely assaulting all who approached him that no man might pass by that way. From his lair among the graves the devil-haunted madman rushes upon Jesus. His neighbors had all fled terrified before him. This stranger who has just landed flies not, but tranquilly contemplates his approach. He who had so lately brought the great calm down into the bosom of the troubled lake, is about now to infuse a greater calm into this troubled spirit. The voice that an hour or two before had said to the winds and the waves, "Peace, be still," has already spoken, while yet the poor demoniac is afar off, to the possessing devil that was within, and said, "Come out of him, thou unclean spirit." If underneath that dark and terrible tyranny of the indwelling demons there still survived within the man some spark of his native independence, some glimmering consciousness of what he once had been and might be again, were but those usurpers of his spirit quieted; if something of the man still were there, crouching, groaning, travailing beneath the intolerable pressure that drove him into madness—what a new and strange sensation must have entered this region of his consciousness when the devils

\* As to the locality in which the miracle was wrought, see note on p. 337.

which had been rioting within him, claiming and using him as all their own, heard that word of Jesus, and in their terror began to cry out, as in the presence of one their acknowledged Superior and Lord! What a new light of hope must have come into that wild and haggard eye as it gazed upon that mysterious being, hailed by the devils as the Son of the Most High God! His relief, indeed, was not immediate; the devils did not at once depart. There was a short and singular colloquy between Christ and them. They beseech, they adjure him not to torment them before the time, not to send them down at once into the abyss, or if he were determined to give liberty to their human captive, then not to drive them from the neighborhood, which, perhaps was their only earthly allotted haunt, but to suffer them to enter into a neighboring herd of swine. The permission was given. They entered into the swine—how we know not, operating upon them how and with what intent we know not. All we have before us is the fact, that the whole herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. What became of the devils then? As the dumb beasts went down into the waters, did they go down into a darker, deeper depth, to be kept there in chains and darkness to the judgment of the great day? It is not said that the devils purposely destroyed the swine. It no doubt was their entrance and the frenzy into which that entrance drove the animals, that made them plunge headlong into the lake. But who shall tell us whether in their reckless and intense love of mischief the foul spirits did not here outwit themselves, creating an impulse that they could not curb, destroying the new habitation they had chosen, and by their own inconsistent and suicidal acts bringing down upon themselves the very fate from which they had prayed to be delivered? We know far too little of the world of spirits to affirm or to deny here; far too little for us either mockingly to reject the whole as an idle tale, or presumingly to speculate as if the mysteries of the great kingdom of darkness stood revealed. It is true, indeed, that whatever was the design or anticipation of the devils in entering into the swine, the result must have been known to Jesus. Knowing then, beforehand, how great the destruction here of property and animal life would be, why was the permission given? We shall answer that question when any man will tell us how many swine one human spirit is worth—why devils were permitted to enter anywhere or do any mischief upon this earth—why such large and successive losses of human and bestial life are ever suffered, the agencies producing which are as much under the control of the Creator as these devils were under that of Christ. To take up the one single

instance in which you can connect the loss of life, not directly with the personal agency but evidently with the permission of the Saviour, and to take exception to that, while the mystery of the large sufferance of sin and misery in this world lies spread out everywhere before and around us, is it not unreasonable and unfair? We do not deny that there is a difficulty here. We are not offering any explanation of this difficulty that we consider to be satisfactory. We are only pleading, first, that in such ignorance as ours is, and with a thousand times greater difficulties everywhere besetting our faith in God, this single difficulty should throw no impediment in the way of our faith in Jesus Christ.

— The keepers of the herd, who had waited to see the issue, went and told in the adjoining village and in the country round about all that had happened. At the tidings the whole population of the neighborhood came out to meet Jesus. They found him, with the man who had been possessed with devils in the manner they all knew so well, sitting at his feet—already clothed, in his right mind, all traces of his possession, save the marks of the bonds and of the fetters, gone. They were alarmed, annoyed, offended at what had happened. There was a mystery about the man, who had such power over the world of spirits, and used it in such a way, that repelled rather than attracted them. They might have thought and felt differently had they looked aright at their poor afflicted brother, upon whom such a happy change had been wrought. But they thought more of swine that had perished than of the man who had been saved; and they besought Jesus to depart out of their coasts. He did not need to have the entreaty addressed to him a second time; he complied at once—prepared immediately to reëmbark, and we do not read that he ever returned to that region—they never had another opportunity of seeing and hearing him. Nor is it the habit of Jesus to press his presence upon the unwilling. Still he has many ways of coming into our coasts, and still have we many ways of intimating to him our unwillingness that he should abide there. He knows how to interpret the inward turning away of our thoughts and heart from him—he knows when the unspoken language of any human spirit to him is—Depart; and if he went away so readily when asked on earth, who shall assure us that he may not as readily take us at our word, and when we wish it, go—go, it may be, never to return?

Christ heard and at once complied with the request of the Gadarenes. But there was another petition presented to him at the same time, with which he did not comply. From the moment that he had been healed, the demoniac had never left his side, never thought of



parting from him, never desired to return to home, or friends, or kindred. A bond stronger than all others bound him to his deliverer. When he saw Jesus make the movement to depart, he accompanied him to the shore, he went with him to the boat. And as he fell there at his feet, we can almost fancy him taking up Ruth's words, and saying, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." He is ready, he is anxious to forsake all and follow Jesus, but he is not permitted. "Go home to thine own house and to thy friends," said Jesus to him, "and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." It was to a heathen home, to friends that knew little about the Lord, and cared little for such knowledge, to whom he was to go. No small trial to be torn thus from the Saviour's side, to go and reside daily among those who had sent that Saviour away from them. But he did it—did more even than he was told to do; not in his own house alone, nor among his own friends alone, but throughout the whole Gentile district of Decapolis he published abroad the great things that Jesus had done for him. Better for the man himself, too long accustomed to dwell alone, taking a tincture of the solitary places in which he dwelt into his own spirit, to mix thus freely and widely with his fellow-men; and better undoubtedly it was for those among whom he lived, acting as the representative of him whom in person they had rejected, but who seem to have lent a more willing ear to the man of their own district and kindred, for we are told that as he spake of Jesus, "all men did marvel," and some, let us hope, did believe.

Let one closing glance be given at the strange picture which this passage in our Saviour's life presents. It abounds in lights and shadows, in striking contrasts—the meanest selfishness confronted with the purest, noblest love. Reckless frenzy, abject terror, profound attention, devoted attachment, rapidly succeed each other in him who, brought into closest union with the highest and the lowest of the powers of the spiritual world, presents to us a condensed epitome of the great conflict between good and evil—between Christ and Satan—in the domain of the human spirit. Undoubtedly it stands the most remarkable instance of dispossession in the gospel narrative, revealing to us at once the depth of that degradation to which our poor humanity may sink, and the height of that elevation to which, through the power and infinite compassion of the Saviour, it may be raised. Was it for the purpose of teaching us more manifestly that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, that in that

age of His appearance devils were permitted to exercise such strange dominion over men? Was it to bring into visible and personal collision the heads of the two opposite spiritual communities—the Prince of Light and the prince of darkness—and to make more visible to all men the supremacy of the one over the other? Was it that, as the Sun of righteousness rose in one quarter of the heavens, upon the opposite a cloud of unwonted blackness and darkness was allowed to gather, that with all the greater brightness there might shine forth the bow of promise for our race? Whatever be the explanation, the fact lies before us that demoniacal possessions did then take place, and were not continued. But though the spirits of evil are not allowed in that particular manner to occupy and torment and degrade us, have they been withdrawn from all access to and all influence over our souls? With so many hints given us in the Holy Scriptures that we wrestle not with flesh and blood alone, but with angels and principalities and powers of darkness; that there are devices of Satan of which it becomes us not to remain ignorant; that the great adversary goeth about seeking whom he may devour; with the command laid upon us, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you;” with the promise given, “The Lord shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly;” are we not warranted to believe, and should we not be ever acting on the conviction, that our souls are the sphere of an unseen conflict, in which rival spirits are struggling for mastery? When some light-winged fancy carries off the seed of the word as it drops in our soul, may not that fancy have come at Satan’s call, and be doing Satan’s work? When the pleasures and honors and riches of this world are invested with a false and seductive splendor, and we are tempted to pursue them as our chief good, may he not have a hand in our temptation who held out the kingdoms of this world and all the glory of them before the Saviour’s eye? But however it may be with evil spirits, we know that evil passions have their haunt and home within our hearts. These, as a strong man armed, keep the house till the stronger than they appears. That stronger one is Christ. To him let us bring our souls; and if it please him to bid any unclean spirit go forth, at his feet let us be sitting, and may he make us willing, whatever our own desire might be, to go wherever he would have us go, and do whatever he would have us do.

## IX.

## THE MISSION OF THE TWELVE.\*

JESUS returned across the lake from Gadara to resume his labors in Galilee. The circuit through its southern towns and villages on which he now embarked was the last he was to make. He looked on the multitudes that gathered round him with a singular compassion. Spiritually to his eye they were as sheep scattered abroad, who when he left them would be without a shepherd. "The harvest," said he to his disciples, "truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." But was he not himself the Lord of the harvest, and had he no laborers to send forth?

Laborers sufficiently numerous, sufficiently trained, there were not; but there were those twelve men whom he had chosen, who had for many months been continually by his side. He can send them; not permanently, for as yet they were comparatively unqualified for the work. Besides, to separate them finally from himself would be to disqualify them for the office which they afterwards were to exercise, of being the reporters of his chief sayings, the witnesses of all the leading actions of his life. But he can send them on a brief, preliminary, experimental tour, one happy effect of which would be, that the townsmen and villagers of Galilee shall have one more opportunity afforded them of hearing the gospel of the kingdom announced. The hitherto close companionship of the twelve with Jesus may have presented to Jewish eyes nothing so extraordinary as to attract much notice and remark. Their great teachers had their favorite pupils, whom they kept continually beside them, and whose services of kindness to them they gratefully received and acknowledged. It was something new, indeed, to see a teacher acting as Jesus did—setting up no school in any one separate locality, confining himself to no one place and to no set times or methods; discoursing about the kingdom, week-day and Sabbath-day alike, publicly in the synagogue, privately at the supper-table, on road-side and lake-side, from the bow of the boat and the brow of the mountain. And always close to him these twelve men are seen who had forsaken their former occupations, and had now attached themselves permanently to his person, ministering to his comfort, imbibing his instructions, forming an innermost circle of discipleship, within which Jesus was often seen to

\* Matt. 9:35-38; 10; Mark 6:7-30; Luke 9:1-9.

retire, and to which the mysteries of the kingdom were revealed as there was ability to receive them.

But now a still more singular spectacle is presented. Jesus takes the twelve, and dividing them into pairs, sends them away from him two and two; delivering to them, as he sends them forth, the address contained in the tenth chapter of the gospel of St. Matthew. A few minute instructions were first given as to the special missionary tour on which they were despatched. It was to be confined strictly to Galilee—to the narrow district that they had already frequently traversed in their Master's company. But he personally was not to be the burden of their message. They were not to announce his advent as the Messiah. He had not done so himself, and their preaching was not to go beyond his own. They were simply to proclaim the advent of the kingdom, leaving the works and words of Jesus to point out the place in that kingdom which he occupied. The power of working miracles they were for the time to enjoy, but they were not to use it, as they might easily have done, for any selfish or mercenary purpose. As freely as they got, they were to give. They were to be absent but a few days. They were going, not among strangers or enemies, but among friends and brethren. The more easily and expeditiously they got through their work the better. Unprovided and unencumbered, they were to cast themselves at once upon the hospitality of those they visited. "Nor was there in this," says Dr. Thomson, "any departure from the simple manners of the country. At this day the farmer sets out on excursions quite as extensive without a para in his purse, and the modern Moslem prophet of Tarshiha thus sends forth his apostles over this identical region. Neither do they encumber themselves with two coats. They are accustomed to sleep in the garments they wear during the day; and in this climate such plain people experience therefrom no inconvenience. They wear coarse shoes, answering to the sandal of the ancients, but never carry two pairs; and, although the staff is the invariable companion of all wayfarers, they are content with *one*."\* The directions given to the apostles were proper to a short and hasty journey, such as the one now before them. On entering any town or village, their first inquiry was to be for the susceptible, the well-disposed, about whom, after the excitement consequent upon Christ's former visits, some information might easily be obtained. They were to salute the house in which such resided, to enter it, and if well-received, were to remain in it, not going from house to house, wasting their time in multiplied

\* "The Land and the Book," p. 316. In St. Matthew's gospel it is said they were not to take staves: in Mark, that they were to take one, that is, one only.



or prolonged formalities and salutations by the way. Wherever rejected, they were to shake off the dust of their feet against that house or city; and to create a profound impression of the importance of the errand on which they were despatched, Jesus closes the first part of his address to them by saying, "Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for that city."

Hitherto, all that he had said had direct reference to the short and rapid journey that lay immediately before them. But limited as it was, the task now committed to them carried in it the germ, the type of that larger apostolic work for which, by the gift of the Spirit, they were to be qualified, and in which, for so many years after their Master's death, they were to be engaged. And so, after speaking of the one, Jesus passes on to the other, the nearer and narrower mission sinking out of sight as his eye rests on the farther and broader mission that lay before them. In the one, the nearer, there was to be no opposition or persecution; in the other, a fiery trial was in store for the faithful. The one, the nearer, was to be confined to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; in the other, they were to come into collision with the kings and governors of the Gentiles. It is of this second period—of the persecution on the one hand, and the gifts of the qualifying Spirit on the other, by which it should be distinguished—that Jesus speaks in the passage embraced in the verses from the sixteenth to the twenty-third. The second division of the address closes, as the first does, by a "Verily I say unto you." The fact thus solemnly affirmed pointing, in the destruction of Jerusalem, to the close of that period over which Christ's prophetic eye was now ranging: "Verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come."

But now the whole earthly mission of the twelve presents itself to the Saviour's eye but as the preface and prelude to that continuous, abiding work of witnessing for him upon this earth to which each separate disciple of the cross is called. Dropping, therefore, all directions and allusions referring exclusively to the apostles and to apostolic times, Jesus, in the closing and larger portion of the address, from the twenty-fourth to the forty-second verse, speaks generally of all true discipleship to himself upon this earth: foretelling its fortunes, describing its character, its duties, its encouragements, and its rewards.

Jesus would hold out no false hopes—would have no one become his upon any false expectations. Misconception, misrepresentation, ill-treatment of one kind or other, his true and faithful followers must

be prepared to meet—to meet without surprise, without complaint, without resentment. The disciple need not hope to be above his Master, the servant above his Lord. “If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household?” But why should the covert slander, the calumny whispered in secret, be dreaded, when the day was coming when all that is covered shall be revealed, all that is hid shall be made known? With his disciples there shall be no concealment of any kind. He came to found no secret society, linked by hidden bonds, depository of inner mysteries. True, there were things that he addressed alone to the apostles’ ear in private, but the secrecy and reserve so practised by him was meant to be temporary and transient. “What I tell you thus in darkness, that speak ye in the light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.” “The doing so may imperil life, the life of the body; but what of that? “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” But even the life of the body shall be watched over, not suffered needlessly to perish. Not a single sparrow, though worth but half a farthing, falls to the ground without God’s knowledge, not a hair of your head but is numbered by him. “Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.” The head whose very hairs are numbered by him, your Father will not see lightly or uselessly cut off. Leave your fate then in his hands, and whatever that may be, be open, be honest, be full, be fearless in the testimony ye bear, for “Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in heaven.” Times of outward persecution may not last, but think not that on this earth there shall ever be perfect peace. “I came not to send peace, but a sword,” a sword which, though it drop out of the open hand of the persecutor, shall not want other hands to take it up and wield it differently. “I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.” And to no severer trial shall my followers be subject, than when it is not force but affection, the affection of the nearest and dearest on earth, that would draw them away from me, or tempt them to be unfaithful to my cause.

‘But above all other claims is the one I make on the love of all who choose me as their Saviour and their Lord. I must be first in their affections: the throne of their heart must be mine; no rival per-

mitted to sit by my side. It is not that I am selfishly exactive of affection; it is not that I am jealous of other love; it is not that I wish or ask that you should love others less in order to love me more; but it is, that what I am to you, what I have done for you, what from this time forth and for evermore I am prepared to be to and to do for you, gives me such a priority and precedence in the claim I make, "that he that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." A bitter thing it may be to crucify some inordinate earthly desire of affection in order to give me, or to keep me in, that place of supremacy which is the only one I possibly or consistently can occupy. But he that taketh not up the cross for me, even as I have taken up the cross for him; he that will not deny himself, and in the exercise of that self-denial take up his cross daily and follow me; "he is not worthy of me, he cannot be my disciple." For this is one of the fixed unalterable conditions of that spiritual economy under which you and all men live, that he who maketh the pursuits and the pleasures of the present scene of things the aim of his being; he who by any manner or form of self-gratification seeks to gain his life, shall lose it, shall fail at the last even in the very thing upon which he has set his heart. Whereas he who for my sake shall give himself to the mortifying of every evil affection of his nature, to the crucifying of the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof, he shall find the life he seems to lose; out of the death of the lower shall spring the higher, the eternal life of the spirit. And let all of every degree, whether they be apostles or prophets, or simple disciples, or the least of these my little ones, be animated, be elevated throughout that strife with self and sin, the world and the devil, to which in Christ they are called, by remembering what a dignified position they occupy, whose representatives they are. "He that receiveth you receiveth me; he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." And if it be in the name or the character of a prophet that any one receives you, he, the receiver, shall have a prophet's reward; or if in the name simply of a righteous man that any one receive you, he, the receiver, shall have a righteous man's reward; nay, more, if it be to any of the least of my little ones that a cup only of cold water be given in the name of a disciple, he, the giver, shall in no wise lose his reward.' For so it is, and ever shall be, not simply by great men going out upon great embassies and speaking words of power to gathered multitudes, or by great assemblies propounding or enforcing great and solemn truths, that the kingdom of Jesus Christ is advanced, but by all, the high

and low, and rich and poor, and weak and strong, who bear his name, looking upon themselves as his missionaries here on earth, sent by him even as he was sent by his Father; sent, that they may be to one another what he has been to them, seeking each other's good, willing to communicate, giving and in giving receiving, receiving and in receiving imparting, each doing a little in one way or other to commend to others that Saviour in whom is all his trust, these littles making up that vast and ever multiplying agency by which the empire of the Redeemer over human spirits is being continually enlarged.

Can any one read over and even partially enter into the meaning of those words which Jesus spake to his apostles when sending them for the first time from his side—a season when there was so little material out of which any rational conjecture could be formed as to his future or theirs, or the future of any school or sect, or institution that He and they might found—and not be convinced that open as day lay all that future to him who here, as elsewhere in so many of his most important discourses, sets forth in a series of perspectives—mixing with and melting into each other—the whole history of his church in all its trials and conflicts from the beginning even to the end? But a greater than a prophet is here—one who speaks of men being hated, persecuted, scourged, and put to death for his name's sake, as if there were nothing in any wise unreasonable or unnatural in it; one who would have all men come to him, and who asks of all who come, love, obedience, and sacrifice, such as but one Being has a right to ask, even he who has redeemed us to God by his blood, whose right over all we are and have and can do is supreme, unchallengeable, unchangeable; whose, by every tie, we are, and whom, by the mightiest of obligations, we are bound to love and serve.

The sight must have been a very extraordinary one, of the apostles setting off two by two from their Master's side, passing with such eagerness and haste through the towns and villages, preaching and working miracles. To hear one man preach as Jesus did, to see one man confirm his word by doing such wonderful works, filled the whole community with wonder. To what a higher pitch must that wonder have been raised when they saw others commissioned by him, endowed by him, not only preaching as he did, but healing, too, all manner of disease! True, the circle was a small one to whom such special powers were delegated; but half a year or so afterwards, as if to teach that it was not to the twelve alone—to those holding the high office of the apostolate—that Jesus was prepared to grant such a commission, he sent out a band of seventy men, embracing, we are inclined



to believe, almost the entire body of his professed disciples in the north who were of the age and had the strength to execute such a task; addressing them in almost the same terms, imposing on them the same duties, and clothing them with the same prerogatives, clearly manifesting by his employment of so large a number of his ordinary disciples that it was not his purpose that the dissemination of the knowledge of his name should be confined to any one small and peculiarly endowed body of men.

It appears from the statement of St. Matthew that when Jesus "had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities," continuing thus his own personal labors in the absence of the twelve. How long they remained apart, in the absence of all definite notes of time, can only be a matter of conjecture. A few days would carry the apostles over all the ground they had to traverse, and they would not loiter by the way. Ere very long they were all united once more at Capernaum. Tidings met them there of a very sad event which had just occurred, we know not exactly where, but if Josephus is to be trusted, it was in the remotest region of that district over which Herod Antipas ruled. It is very singular that though Herod governed Galilee, and built and generally resided at Tiberias, a town upon the lake-side a few miles south of the plain of Gennesaret, he had never met with Jesus; had done nothing to interrupt his labors, though these were making so great a sensation all over the country; had never, apparently, till about this time, even heard of him or of his works. It has not unreasonably been conjectured that soon after throwing John the Baptist into prison, he had been absent on one of his journeys to Rome during those very months in which our Lord's Galilean ministry was most openly and actively conducted. Even, however, had this not been the case—as we never read of Jesus visiting Tiberias—we can readily enough imagine that Herod might have been living there all the time, too much engaged with other things to heed much what, if at all spoken of in his presence, would be spoken of contemptuously as a new Jewish religious ferment that was spreading among the people. The public tranquillity was not threatened; and, that preserved, they might have as many such religious excitements among them as they liked. Though fully cognizant of the nature and progress of the Baptist's ministry, he had done nothing to stop it. It was not on any public or political grounds, but purely and solely on a personal one, that he had cast John into prison. At first he had listened to him gladly, and done many things at his bidding, but the Baptist had been bold enough to tell him that it was not

lawful for him to have his brother's wife, and brave enough at all hazards to stand by what he said. He would neither modify nor retract. Herod's anger was kindled against him, and was well nursed and kept warm by Herodias. She would have made short work with the impudent intermeddler. But Herod feared the people, and so contented himself with casting him into that prison in which he lay so many long and weary months. While lying there alone and inactive, he had sent, as we have seen, two of his disciples to Jesus to ask him, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" It was after all but an indirect and ambiguous reply that they had brought back—enough, and more than enough, to meet any transient doubt as to Christ's character and office which in any quarter might have arisen, but carrying with it no reference to the Baptist's personal state—embodying no message of sympathy, holding out no prospect of relief. All that was left to John was to cling to the hope that his long imprisonment must be near its end. Herod might relent, or Jesus might interpose; somehow or other the deliverance would come. And it did come at last, but not as John had looked for it. It came in the form of that grim executioner, who, breaking in upon his solitude, and flashing before his eyes the instrument of death, bade him bow his head at once to the fatal stroke. Short warning this: was no explanation to be given? no interview with Herod allowed? not a day nor an hour for preparation given? No. The king's order was for instant execution. The damsel was waiting for the head, and the mother waiting for the damsel. How did the Baptist bear himself at that trying moment? There were no crowds to witness this martyr's death; not one there to tell us afterwards how he looked, or what he said. Alone, he had to gird his spirit up to meet his doom. A moment or two, spent we know not how, and the death-blow fell.

It is said that when death comes suddenly upon a man—when, this moment in full possession of his faculties, he knows that next moment is to be his last—within that moment there flashes often upon the memory the whole scenery of a bygone life. If such a vision of the past rose up before the Baptist's eye, what a strange, mysterious thing might that life of his on earth have seemed—how like a failure, how seemingly abortive! Thirty long years of preparation; then a brief and wonderful success, brimful of promise; that success suddenly arrested; all means and opportunities of active service plucked out of his hand. Then the idle months in prison, and then the felon's death! Mysterious, inexplicable as such a life might look to the eye of sense, how looked it to the eye of God? Many

flattering things have been said of men when they were living; many false and fulsome epitaphs have been graven on their tombs; but the lips that never flattered have said of John, that of those that have been born of women there hath not arisen a greater; his greatness mainly due to his peculiar connection with Christ, but not unsupported by his personal character, for he is one of the few prominent figures in the sacred page upon which not a single stain is seen to rest. And though they buried him in some obscure grave to which none went on pilgrimage, yet for that tomb the pen that never traced a line of falsehood has written the brief but pregnant epitaph: "John fulfilled his course." Terminating so abruptly at such an early stage, with large capacity for work, and plenty of work to do, shall we not say of this man that his life was unseasonably and prematurely cut off? No; his earthly task was done: he had a certain work assigned him here, and it was finished. Nor could a higher eulogium have been pronounced over his grave than this, that he had fulfilled the course assigned to him by Providence. Let the testimony thus borne to him convince us that there is a special and narrow sphere which God has marked out for each of us on earth. To be wise to know what that sphere is, to accept it and keep to it, and be content with it—diligently, perseveringly, thankfully, submissively to do its work and bear its burdens, is one of our first duties, a duty which in its discharge will minister one of our simplest and purest joys.

The bloody head was grasped by the executioner and carried into the king's presence, and given to the damsel; and she carried it to her mother. The sense of sated vengeance may for the moment have filled the heart of Herodias with a grim and devilish joy; but those pale lips, those fixed and glazed eyes, that livid countenance upon whose rigid features the shadow of its living sternness is still resting, she cannot look long at them; she waves the ghastly object from her sight, to be borne away, and laid we know not where.

The headless body had been left upon the prison floor. So soon as they hear of what has happened, some of John's disciples come and lift it up and bear it out sadly to burial; and that last office done, in their desolation and helplessness they followed the instinct of that new faith which their Master's teaching had inspired, they went and told Jesus. They did what in all our sorrows we should do: they went and told him who can most fully sympathize, and who alone can thoroughly and abidingly comfort and sustain.

## X.

THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND, AND THE  
WALKING UPON THE WATER.\*

HEROD first heard of Jesus immediately after the Baptist's death. While some said that this Jesus now so much spoken of was Elias, or one of the prophets, there were others about the Tetrarch who suggested that he was John risen from the dead. Herod had little real faith, but that did not prevent his lying open enough to superstitious fancies. He was ill at ease about what he had done on his birthday feast—haunted by fears that he could not shake off. The suggestion about Jesus fell in with these fears, and helped in a way to soothe them. And so, after some perplexity and doubt, at last he adopted it, and proclaimed it to be his own conviction, saying to his servants, as if with a somewhat lightened conscience, "This is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead: and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him." John had done no mighty works so long as Herod knew him, but now, in this new estate, he had risen to a higher level, to which he, Herod, had helped to elevate him—he would like to see him in the new garb.

The disciples of John, who came and told Jesus of their master's death, had to tell him, also, of the strange credulity and curiosity of Herod. We are left to imagine the impression their report created. It came at the very time when the twelve had returned from their short and separate excursions, and when, as the fruit of the divided and multiplied agency that had been exerted, so many were coming and going out and in among the reassembled band, that "they had no leisure," we are told, "so much as to eat." Mark 6:21. For himself and for them, Jesus desired now a little quiet and seclusion. For himself—that he might ponder over a death prophetic of his own, the occurrence of which made, as we shall see, an epoch in his ministry. For them—that they might have some respite from accumulated fatigue and toil. His own purpose fixed, he invited them to join him in its execution, saying to them, "Come ye yourselves into a desert place and rest a while." Such a desert place as would afford the seclusion that they sought, they had not to go far to find. Over against Capernaum, across the lake, in the district running up northward to Bethsaida, are plenty of lonely enough places to choose among. They take boat to row across. The wind blows fresh

\* Matt. 14:12-33; Mark 6:30-52; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-21.



from the northwest; for shelter, they hug the shore. Their departure had been watched by the crowd, and now, when they see how close to the land they keep, and how slow the progress is they make, a great multitude out of all the cities—embracing, in all likelihood, many of those companies which had gathered to go up to the Passover—run on foot along the shore. A less than two hours' walk brings them to Bethsaida, at the northern extremity of the lake. There they cross the Jordan, and enter upon that large and uninhabited plain that slopes down to the lake on its northeastern shores. Another hour or so carries them to the spot at which Christ and his apostles land, where many, having outstripped the boat, are ready to receive them, and where more and more still come, bearing their sick along with them. It was somewhat of a trial to have the purpose of the voyage apparently thus baffled, the seclusion sought after thus violated; but if felt at all, it sat light upon a heart which, turning away from the thought of self, was filled with compassion for those who were "as sheep not having a shepherd." Retiring to a neighboring mountain, Jesus sits down and teaches, and heals; and so the hours of the afternoon pass by.

But now another kind of solicitude seizes on the disciples. They may not have been as patient of the defeat of their Master's purpose as he was himself. They may have grudged to see the hours that he had destined to repose broken in upon and so fully occupied. True, they had little to do themselves but listen, and wait, and watch. The crowd grew, however; stream followed stream, and poured itself out upon the mountain-side. The day declined; the evening shadows lengthened; yet, as if never satisfied, that vast company still clung to Jesus, and made no movement to depart. The disciples grew anxious. They came at last to Jesus, and said, "This is a desert place, and the time is now past: send the multitude away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and lodge, and buy bread for themselves, for they have nothing to eat." "They need not depart," said Jesus, "give you to them to eat." Turning to Philip, a native of Bethsaida, one well acquainted with the adjoining district, Jesus saith in an inquiring tone, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" Philip runs his eye over the great assemblage, and making a rough estimate of what would be required, he answered, "Two hundred pennyworth of bread would not be sufficient for them, that every one might 'get a little;' shall we go and buy as much?" Jesus asked how much food they had among themselves, without needing to go and make any further purchase. Andrew, another native of Bethsaida, who had been scrutinizing the



THE MIRACLE OF THE LOAVES AND FISHES.

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crowd, discovering some old acquaintances, said, "There is a lad here, who has five barley loaves and two small fishes; but what are they among so many?" "Bring them to me," said Jesus. They brought them. "Make the men," he said, "sit down by fifties in a company"—an order indicative of our Lord's design that there might be no confusion and that the attention of all might be directed to what he was about to do. The season was favorable—it was the full spring-tide of the year; the place was convenient—much green grass covering the broad and gentle slope that stretched away from the base of the mountain. The marshalling of five thousand men, besides women and children, into such an orderly array, must have taken some time. The people, however, quietly consented to be so arranged, and company after company sat down, till the whole were seated in the presence of the Lord, who all the while has stood in silence watching the operation, with that scanty stock of provisions in his hand. All eyes are now upon him. He begins to speak; he prays; he blesses the five loaves and the two fishes, breaks them, divides them among the twelve, and directs them to go and distribute them among the others.

And now, among those thousands—sitting there and ranged so that all can see what is going on—the mystery of their feeding begins to show itself. There were one hundred companies of fifty, besides the women and children. In each apostle's hand, as he takes his portion from the hand of Jesus, there is not more than would reach one man's need. Yet, as the distribution by the twelve begins, there is enough to give what looks like a sufficient portion to each of the hundred men, who sits at the head of his company. He gets it, and, little enough as it seems for himself, he is told to divide it, and give the half of it to his neighbor, to be dealt with in like fashion. Each man in the ranks, as he begins to break, finds that the half that he got at first grows into a whole in the very act of dividing and bestowing; the small initial supply grows and multiplies in the transmission from hand to hand. All eat—all are satisfied. "Gather up," said Jesus, as he saw some unused food lying scattered upon the ground, "the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." They do; and while one basket could hold the five loaves and the two fishes, it now takes twelve to hold these fragments.

Of the nature and purpose of this great miracle, we shall have something to say hereafter. Meanwhile, let us notice its immediate effect. One of its singularities, as compared with other miracles of our Lord, was this: that such a vast multitude were all at once not only spectators of it, but participators of its benefits. Seven or eight



thousand hungry men, women and children sit down upon a hillside, and there before their eyes, for an hour or two—full leisure given them to contemplate and reflect—the spectacle goes on, of a few loaves and fishes, under Christ's blessing, and by some mysterious acting of his great power, expanding in their hands till they are all more than satisfied. Each sees the wonder, and shares in the result. It is not like a miracle, however great, wrought instantly upon a single man. Such a miracle the same number of men, women, and children might see, indeed, but could not all see as each saw this. The impression here of a very marvellous exhibition of the divine power, so near akin to that of creative energy, was one so broadly, so evenly, so slowly, and so deeply made, that it looks to us just what we might have expected when the thousands rise from their seats, when all is over, and say one to another, what they had never got the length of saying previously, "This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world." No longer any doubt or vagueness in their faith—no longer a question with them which prophet or what kind of prophet he was. He is none other than their Messiah, their Prince! He who can do that which they have just seen him do, what could be beyond his power? He may not himself be willing to come forward, assert his right, exert his power—but they will do it for him—they will do it now; they will take him at once, and force him to be their king. Jesus sees the incipient action of that leaven which, if allowed to work, would lead on to some act of violence. He sees that the leaven of earthliness and mere Jewish pride and ambition has entered even among the twelve, who, as they see and hear what is going on, appear not unwilling to take part with the multitude. It is time for him to interfere and prevent any such catastrophe. He calls the twelve to him, and directs them to embark immediately, to go alone and leave him there, to row back to Capernaum, where, in the course of the night or the next morning, he might join them. A strange and unwelcome proposal—for why should they be parted, and where was their Master to go, or what was he to do, in the long hours of that lowering night that was coming down in darkness and storm upon the hills and lake? They remonstrate; but with a peremptoriness and decision, the very rarity of which gave it all the greater power, he overrules their remonstrances, and constrains them to get into the boat and leave him behind. Turning to the multitude, whose plot about taking and making him a king, taken up by his twelve chief followers, this transaction had interrupted, he dismisses them in such a way, with such words of power, that they at once disperse.

And now he is alone. Alone he goes up into a mountain—alone

he prays there. The darkness deepens; the tempest rises; midnight comes with its gusts and gloom. There—somewhere on that mountain, sheltered or exposed—there, for five or six hours, till the fourth watch of the night, till after dawn—Jesus holds his secret and close fellowship with heaven. Into the privacies of those secluded hours of his devotion we presume not to intrude. But if, as we shall presently see was actually the case, this threatened outbreak of a blinded popular impulse in his favor—the attempt thus made, and for the moment thwarted, to take him by force and make him a king—created a marked crisis in the history of our Lord's dealings with the multitude, as well as of their disposition and conduct towards him—this night of lonely prayer is to be put alongside of the other instances in which, upon important emergencies, our Saviour had recourse to privacy and prayer, teaching us, by his great example, where our refuge and our strength in all like circumstances are to be found.

Meanwhile it has fared ill with the disciples on the lake. Two or three hours' hearty labor at the oar might have carried them over to Capernaum. But the adverse tempest is too strong for them. The whole night long they toil among the waves, against the wind. The day had dawned, a dim light from the east is spreading over the water; they had rowed about five and-twenty or thirty furlongs—were rather more than halfway across the lake—when, treading on the troubled waves, as on a level, solid pavement, a figure is seen approaching, drawing nearer and nearer to the boat. Their toil is changed to terror—the vigorous hand relaxes its grasp—the oars stand still in the air or are but feebly plied—the boat rocks heavily—a cry of terror comes from the frightened crew—they think it is a spirit. He made as though he would have passed them by—they cry out the more. For though so like their Master as they now see the form to be, yet if he go past them in silence, it cannot be other than his ghost. But now he turns, and, dispelling at once all doubt and fear, he says, “Be of good cheer; it is I, be not afraid.” He is but a few yards from the boat, when, leaping at once—as was no strange thing with him—from one extremity to the other, Peter says, “Lord, if it be thou”—or rather, for we cannot think that he had any doubt as to Christ's identity—“Since it is thou, let me come unto thee on the water.” Why not wait till Jesus comes into the boat? Because he is so pleased, so proud to see his Master tread with such victorious footstep the restless devouring deep; because he wants to share the triumph of the deed—to walk side by side, before his brothers, with Jesus, though it be but a step or two.

He gets the permission—he makes the attempt—is at first successful. So long as he keeps his eye on Jesus—so long as that faith which prompted the proposal, that sense of dependence in which the first step out of the boat and down upon the deep was taken, remain unshaken—all goes well. But he has scarce moved off from the boat when he looks away from Christ, and out over the tempestuous sea. The wind is not more boisterous, the waves are not higher or rougher than they were the moment before, but he was not thinking of them then. He was looking at, he was thinking of, he was hanging upon his Master then. Now he looks at, thinks only of wind and wave. His faith begins to fail; fearing, he begins to sink; sinking, he fixes his eye afresh and most earnestly on Jesus. The eye affecting the heart, rekindling faith in the very bosom of despair, he cries out, "*Lord, save me!*" It was the cry of weakness, of wild alarm, yet it had in it one grain of gold. It was a cry to Jesus as to the only one that now could help; some true faith mingling now with all the fear.

The help so sought for came at once. "Immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" At the grasp of that helping hand, at the rebuke of that chiding voice, let us believe that faith came back into Peter's breast, and that not borne up or dragged through the waters, but walking by his Master's side, he made his way back to the little vessel where his comrades were, to take his place among them a wiser and a humbler man. As soon as Jesus and he had entered the vessel, we are told that the wind not only ceased, but that "immediately the ship was at the land whither they went." Of those who were in the ship that night some were exceedingly but stupidly amazed, their hearts hardened, untouched by the multiplied miracles (Mark 6:51, 52) of the last twelve hours; others came and worshipped Jesus, saying, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God;" one of the first instances in which this great title, of which we shall have so much to say hereafter, was applied to him.

We may divide the miracles of our Saviour into two classes: 1. Those wrought in or upon nature. 2. Those wrought in or upon man. Of the thirty-three miracles of which some detailed account is given us in the gospels, nine belong to the former and twenty-four to the latter class. But this gives no true idea of the mere numerical ratio of the one kind of miracles to the other. It is but a very few of the many thousand cases of healing on the part of Jesus of which any record has been preserved; while it seems probable that all the instances have been recounted in which there was any intervention with the laws or processes of the material universe. It is remarka-



ble at least that of the small number of this class a repetition of the same miracle is twice recorded—that of the multiplying of bread and of an extraordinary draught of fishes. Looking broadly at these two classes of miracles, it might appear like a discriminating difference between them that the one, the miracles on nature, were more works of power, the miracles on man more works of love. And admitting for the moment the existence of some ground for this distinction, it pleases us to think what a vast preponderance Christ's works of love had over his works of power. But it is only to a very limited extent that we are disposed to admit the truth of this distinction. We know of no miracle of our Lord that was a mere miracle of power, a mere display of his omnipotence, a mere sign wrought to prove that he was almighty. Every miracle of our Saviour carried with it a lesson of wisdom, gave an exhibition of his character, was a type of some lower sphere of his working as the Redeemer of our souls. In a far more intimate sense than any of them was an outward proof of his divine authority; they were all instances or illustrations in more shadowy or more substantial form of the remedial dispensations of his mercy and grace in and upon the sinful children of men, wrought by him and recorded now for us, far more to teach us what, as our Saviour, he is—what he has already done, and what he is prepared to do for us spiritually—than to put into our hands evidence of the divinity of his mission.

Let us take the two miracles that we have now before us, both of which belong to the first and smaller class, the miracles on nature. Had it been the purpose of our Lord to make a mere display of his omnipotence in the feeding of five thousand men, one can readily imagine of its being done in a far more visible and striking style than the one chosen. He could have had the men, women, and children go and gather up the stones of the desert or of the lake-side; and as they did so, could have turned each stone into bread. Or he could have brought forth the five loaves, and in the presence of all the people have multiplied them into five thousand by a wave of his hand—by a word of his power. He chose rather, here as elsewhere—might we not say as everywhere?—to veil the workings of his omnipotence—to hide, as it were, the working of his hand and power, mingling it with that of human hands and common earthly elements. How much more it was our Lord's design to convey a lesson of instruction than to give a display of his almightiness we shall better be able to judge when we have before us his own discourse illustrative of this very miracle, delivered on the following day. We shall then see how apt and singular and recondite a symbolism of what he spiritually is



to all true believers lay wrapped up in his blessing and breaking and dividing the bread.

But further still, was not the agency of all his ministering servants, of all his true disciples, most truly, vividly, picturesquely represented in what happened upon that mountain-side? "Give ye them to eat!" such were Christ's words to his apostles, as he handed to each of them his portion of the five loaves and the two fishes. 'Take and break and give to one another;' such were the apostles' words to the multitude. And as each took and broke, the half that he kept for himself grew within the hand that broke it, as did in turn the other half he handed to his neighbor. Such was the rule and method of the distribution and multiplication of the bread given to the thousands on the desert place of Bethsaida. Such is the rule and method of the distribution and multiplication of the bread of life.

Let us gladly and gratefully accept the lesson that the miracle conveys. Let us believe, and act upon the belief, that the readier we are to distribute of that bread to others, the fuller and the richer shall be our own supply—that we do not lose but gain by giving here—that there is that scattereth here and yet increaseth. From hand to hand let the life-giving bread be passed, till all the hungry and the perishing get their portion—till all eat and are satisfied.

Or look again at the other miracle, that of walking upon the water. It was indeed a miracle of power, but one also of pity too, and love. He came in the morning watch, far more to relieve from toil and protect from danger his wornout and exposed disciples than, merely to show that the sovereignty over nature was in his hands. Nor did he let that coming pass without an incident pregnant with spiritual instruction to us also; for is there not much in each of us of Peter's weakness? We may not have his first courage or faith—for there was much of both in the stepping out of the boat; or we may not share in his impetuosity and over-confidence; and so we may not throw ourselves among the waves and winds. But often, nevertheless, they are around us; and too apt are we, when so it happens with us, to look at them—to think of our difficulties and our trials and our temptations, till, Christ forgotten and out of sight, we begin to sink, happy only if in our sinking we turn to him, and his hand be stretched out to save us. In his extremity, it was not Peter's laying hold of Christ, it was Christ's laying hold of him that bore him up. And in our extremity it is not our hold of Jesus, but his of us, on which our trust resteth. Our hand is weak, but his is strong; ours so readily relaxes—too often lets go its hold; but his—none can pluck out of it, and none that are in it can perish.

## XI.

## THE DISCOURSE IN THE SYNAGOGUE OF CAPERNAUM.\*

WHEN, after a single day's absence on the other side of the lake, Jesus and his disciples returned to the land of Gennesaret, so soon as they were come out of the ship, "straightway," we are told, "they knew him, and ran through that whole region round about, and sent out into all that country, and brought to him all that were diseased, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick; and whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole." Matt. 14:35; Mark 6:54-56.

Never before had there appeared to be so great and so lively an interest in his teaching, or so large a measure of faith in his healing power. But behind this show of things Jesus saw that there was little or no readiness to receive him in his highest character and office. Some were prepared to acknowledge him as Elias, or one of the prophets; some, like Herod, to hail him as the Baptist risen from the dead; others, like the multitude on the lakeside, to take him by force and make him a king; but the notions of all alike concerning him and his mission were narrow, natural, earthly, selfish, unspiritual. It is at this very culminating point of his wonderful apparent popularity, that Jesus begins to speak and act as if the hope were gone of other and higher notions of himself and of the kingdom of God being entertained by the nation at large. Hitherto he had spoken much about that kingdom, and but little about himself; leaving his place therein to be inferred from what he said and did. He had spoken much about the dispositions that were to be cultivated, the duties that were to be done, the trials that were to be borne, the blessedness that was to be enjoyed by those admitted into the kingdom--of which earlier teaching St. Matthew had preserved a full and perfect specimen in the Sermon on the Mount; but he had said little or nothing of the one living central spring of light and life and holiness and joy within that kingdom, giving to it its being, character, and strength. In plainer or in clearer guise he had proclaimed to the multitude those outer things of the kingdom whose setting forth should have allured them into it; but its inner things had either been kept back from sight, or presented in forms draped around with a thick mantle

of obscurity. He had never once hinted at his own approaching death as needful to its establishment—as laying, in fact, the foundation upon which it was to rest; nor had he spoken of the singularities by which all its subjects were to be united personally to him, and to which their entrance and standing and privileges within the kingdom were to be wholly due. Now, however, for the first time in public, he alludes to his death, in such a way indeed as few if any of his hearers could then understand, yet one that assigned to it its true place in the economy of our redemption. Now for the first time in public he speaks openly and most emphatically of what he is and must be to all who are saved; proclaiming a supreme attachment to himself, an entire and exclusive dependence on himself, a vital incorporating union with himself, to be the primary and essential characteristic of all true subjects of that kingdom which he came down from heaven to set up on earth. From this time he gives up apparently the project of gaining new adherents; withdraws from the crowds, forsakes the more populous districts of Galilee, devotes himself to his disciples, retires with them to remote parts of the country, discourses with them about his approaching decease, unfolding as he had not done before, both publicly and privately, the profounder mysteries of his person and of his work.

To the discourse recorded by St. John in the sixth chapter of his gospel, the special interest attaches that it marks this transition point in the teachings and actings of our Lord. The great body of those miraculously fed upon the five loaves and the two fishes dispersed at the command of Christ, and sought their homes or new camping grounds. A number, however, still lingered near the spot where the miracle had been performed. They had seen the apostles go off without Jesus. They had noticed that the boat they sailed in was the only one that had left the shore. They expected to meet Christ again next morning; but, though they sought for him everywhere around, they could not find him. He must have taken some means to follow and rejoin his disciples, though what these were they cannot fancy. In the course of the forenoon some boats come over from Tiberias, of which they take advantage to recross the lake. After searching for him in the land of Gennesaret they find him at last in the synagogue of Capernaum. The edge of their wonder still fresh, they say to him, “Rabbi, when camest thou hither?”—a mere idle question of curiosity, to which he gives no answer. A far weightier question for them than any as to the time or the manner in which Jesus had got here was, why were they so eagerly following him? This question he will help them to answer. “Verily, verily,” is our Lord’s reply, “ye

seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled." The miracle of the preceding evening had introduced a new element of attractive power. The multitudes who had previously followed Jesus to get their sick healed and to see the wonders that he did, were now tempted to follow him, in the hope of having that miracle repeated—their hunger again relieved. Sad in heart as he contrasted their eagerness in this direction with their apathy in another, Jesus said to them, "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give you; for him hath God the Father sealed." A dim yet somewhat true idea of what Christ means dawns upon the minds of his hearers. Accepting his rebuke, perceiving that he points to something required of them in order to promote their higher and eternal interests; knowing no other way in which this could be done than by rendering some service to God, but altogether failing to notice the allusion to the Son of man and what they were to get from him, "What shall we do," they say, "that we may work the works of God?" 'tell us what these works are with which God will be most pleased, by the doing of which we may attain the everlasting life.' "This," said Jesus, "is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." 'It is not by many works, nor indeed, strictly speaking, by any thing looked at as mere work, that you are to gain that end. There is one thing here which, primarily and above all others, you are called to do: to believe on him whom the Father hath sent unto you; to believe on me: not simply to credit what I say, but to put your supreme, undivided trust in me as the procurer and dispenser of that kind of food by which alone your souls can be nourished up into the life everlasting.' It was a large and very peculiar demand on Christ's part, to put believing on himself before and above all other things required. Struck with its singularity, they say unto him, "What sign showest thou that we may see and believe thee? what dost thou work?" 'If thou art really what thou apparently claimest to be—greater than all that have gone before thee, greater even than Moses—show us some sign; not one like those already shown, which, wonderful as they have been, have been but signs on earth; show us one from heaven like that of Moses, "when our fathers did eat manna in the desert, as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat."' 'You ask me'—such in effect is our Lord's reply—'to prove my superiority to Moses by doing something greater than he ever did; you point to that supply of the manna as one of the greatest of his miracles. But in doing so you make a twofold mistake. It was not Moses that gave that bread



from heaven. It came from a higher than he—from him who is my Father, and who giveth still the true bread from heaven; not such bread as the manna, which was distilled like the dew in the lower atmosphere of the earth, which did not give life, but only sustained it, and that only for a limited time and a limited number. The true “bread of God is that\* which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.”

Hitherto, Jesus had been speaking of a food or bread which he and his Father were ready to impart; describing it as superior to the manna, inasmuch as it came from a higher region and discharged a higher office, supplying the wants, not of a nation, but of the world; yet still speaking of it as if it were a separate outward thing. Imagining that it was something external, that eye could see, or hand could handle, or mouth could taste, to which such wonderful qualities belonged, with a greater earnestness and reverence than they had yet shown, his hearers say to him, “Evermore give us this bread.” The time has come to drop that form of speech which Jesus hitherto has used; to cease speaking abstractedly or figuratively about a food or bread, to tell them plainly and directly, so that there could be no longer any misunderstanding, who and what the meat was which endureth unto everlasting life. “Then said he unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” “I am not simply the procurer or the dispenser of this bread, I am more—I am the bread. If you would have it, you must not only come to me for it, but take me as it. And if you do so—if you come to me and believe on me—you shall find in me that which will fully and abidingly meet and satisfy all the inward wants and cravings of your spiritual nature, all the hunger and the thirst of the soul. Bring these to me, and it shall not be as when you try to quench or satisfy them elsewhere with earthly things, the appetite growing even the more urgent while the things it feeds on become ever less capable of gratifying. Bring the hunger and the thirst of your soul to me, and they shall be filled. But ye will not do so, ye have not done so. “Ye have seen me, and believe not.” It may look thus as if my mission had failed, as if few or none would come to me that they might have life; but this is my comfort in the midst of all the present and prevailing unbelief, that, “all that the Father giveth me shall come to me,” their coming to me is as sure as their donation to me by the Father. But as sure also as is his fixed purpose is this fixed fact, “him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out;” for I came down from heaven on no

\* Not “he,” as in our translation.

separate or random errand of my own, to throw myself with unfixed purposes amid unforeseen events to mould them to unknown or uncertain issues. I came "not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me;" and that will of his I carry out in rejecting none that come to me, in throwing my arms wide open to welcome every one who feels himself dying of a hunger of the heart that he cannot get satisfied, in taking him and caring for him, and providing for him, not letting him perish—no part of him perish, not even that which is naturally perishable; but taking it also into my charge to change at last the corruptible into the incorruptible, the natural into the spiritual, redeeming and restoring the entire man, clothing him with the garment meet for a blessed and glorious immortality; for "this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." Let me say it once again, that no man may think there lies any obstacle to his salvation in a preformed purpose or decree of my Father, that all may know how free their access to me is, and how sure and full and enduring the life is that they shall find in me. "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son and believeth on him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." Compare John 6:39, 40.

Overlooking all the momentous truths, all the gracious assurances and promises that these words of Jesus conveyed, his hearers fix upon a single declaration that he had made. Ignorant of the great mystery of his birth, they murmur among themselves, saying, "Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it, then, that he saith, I came down from heaven?" Jesus does not answer these two questions, any more than he had answered the question they had put to him at first as to how he got to Capernaum. He sees and accepts the offence that had been taken, the prejudice that had been created, and he does nothing to remove it. He enters into no explanation of the saying that he had come down from heaven; but he will tell these murmurers and objectors still more plainly than he has yet done why it is that they stand at such a distance and look so askance upon him. "Murmur not among yourselves." "Hope not by any such questions as you are putting to one another to solve the difficulties that can so easily be raised about this or that particular saying of mine. What you want is not a solution of such difficulties, which are, after all, the fruits and not the causes of your unbelief. The root of that unbelief lies deeper than where you would place it. It lies in the whole frame and habit of your heart and life. The bent of your nature is away from me. You want the desires, the

affections, the aims, the motives which would create within you the appetite and relish for that bread which comes down from heaven. You want that inward secret drawing of the heart which also cometh from heaven, for "no man can come to me except the Father draw him"—a drawing this, however, that if sought will never be withheld; if imparted, will prevail, for "it is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me." Not that you are to imagine that you can go to him as you can go to me, that you can see him without seeing me, can hear him without hearing me. "Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father." It is in seeing me that you see the Father. It is in hearing me that you hear the Father. It is through me that the drawing of the Father cometh. Open eye and ear then, look unto me, hear, and your soul shall live. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life." He hath it now, he hath it in me. "I am that bread of life." A very different kind of bread from that of which you boast as once given of old through Moses. "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead." The manna had no life in itself. If not instantly used, it corrupted and perished. It had power to sustain life for a time, but none to ward off death. The bread from heaven is life-giving and death-destroying. "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

However puzzled about the expression of his coming down from heaven, Christ's hearers might readily enough have understood him as taking occasion from the recent miracle to represent himself, the truths he taught, and the pattern life he led, as being for the soul of man what the bread is for his body. But this change of the bread into flesh, or rather, this identifying of the two, this speaking of his own flesh as yet to be given for the life of the world, and when so given to be the bread of which so much had been already said, startles and perplexes them more than ever. Not simply murmuring, but striving among themselves, they say, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" a question quite akin to that which Nicodemus put when he said, "How can a man be born again when he is old?" and treated by Jesus in like manner, by a repetition, in a still more stringent form, of the statement to which exception had been taken: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of

man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." To speak of eating his flesh was sufficiently revolting to those who understood him literally; but to Jewish ears, to those who had been so positively prohibited all use of blood as food, how inexplicable, how almost impious, must the speaking of drinking his blood have been. Indifferent to the effect, our Lord goes on to repeat and reiterate, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me."

Such, as I have attempted in the way of paraphrase to bring them out to view, were the most salient points in our Lord's address, and such the links by which they were united. Among 'all our Lord's discourses in Galilee, this one stands by itself distinguished from all the others by the manner in which Christ speaks of himself. Nowhere else do you find him so entirely dropping all reserve as to his own position, character, services, and claims. Let him be the eternal Son of the Father who veiled the glories of Divinity, and assumed the garb of mortal flesh that he might serve and suffer and die for us men and our redemption, then all that he here asserts, requires, and promises appears simple, natural, appropriate. Let the great truths of the incarnation and atonement be rejected, then how shall this discourse be shielded from the charges of egotism and arrogance? But Christ's manner of speaking to the people is here as unprecedented as the way of speaking about himself. Here also there is the absence of all reserve. Instead of avoiding what he knew would repel, he seems rather to have obtruded it: answering no questions, giving no explanations, modifying no statements; unsparingly exposing the selfishness, ungodliness, unbelief of his auditors. The strong impression is created that by bringing forth the most hidden mysteries of the kingdom, and clothing these in forms liable to give offence, it was his purpose to test and sift, not the rude mass of his Galilean hearers only, but the circle of his own discipleship. Such at least was its effect; for "many of his disciples, when they heard this, said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" Jesus does not treat their murmuring exactly as he had that of the Jews; turning to them, he says, "Doth this about my coming down from heaven offend you?" but "what and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" "Doth this about eating my flesh and drinking my blood offend you? "It is the spirit that quickeneth;" the mere



flesh without the spirit profiteth nothing, hath no life-giving power. It is by no external act whatever, by no outward ordinance or service, that you are to attain to the life everlasting. It is by hearing, believing, spiritually coming to me, spiritually feeding upon me, that this is to be reached. "The words that I speak unto you, they are the spirit and they are the life." Still I know, for I must speak as plainly to you as to the multitude, "that there are some of you that believe not. Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father." To have hard things said, and then to have the incredulity they generated exposed in such a way and attributed to such a cause, was what many could not bear; and so from that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him. With infinite sadness, such a sorrow as he only could feel, his eye and heart follow them as they go away; but he lets them go quietly and without further remonstrance; then, turning to the twelve, he says, "Will ye also go away?" "Lord," is Peter's prompt reply, "to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." What Jesus thought of this confession we shall see, when not long afterwards it was repeated. Now he makes no comment upon it; but as one upon whose mind the last impression of the day was that of sadness over so many who were alienated from him, he closes the interview by saying, "Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?"

Such were its immediate original results. What would be the effect of a first hearing or first reading of this discourse now? We cannot well answer the question; we have read and heard it so often, its phrases are so familiar to our ears, the key to its darkest sayings is in our hands. Nevertheless, are there not many to whom some of its expressions wear a hard and repulsive aspect—are felt, though they would scarcely acknowledge this to themselves, as overstrained and exaggerated? It is not possible indeed to understand, much less to sympathize with and appreciate, the fulness and richness of meaning involved in many of these expressions, unless we look to our Lord's death as the great propitiation for our sins, and have had some experience of the closeness, the tenderness, the blessedness of that mystic bond which incorporates each living member of the spiritual body with Christ the living head. Had Jesus spoken of himself, simply and alone as the bread of life, it had been possible to have understood him as setting forth his instructions and his example as furnishing the best kind of nutriment for the highest part of our nature. Even so strong a phrase as his flesh being the bread, might have been interpreted as an allusion to his assumption of our nature, and

to the benefits flowing directly from the incarnation. But when he speaks of his flesh being given for the life of the world; when he speaks of the drinking of his blood as well as of the eating of his flesh; pronounces them to be the source at first and the support afterwards of a life that cannot die, and that shall draw after it the resurrection of the body, it is impossible to put any rational construction upon phrases like these other than that which sees in them a reference to our Lord's atoning death as the spring and fountain of the new spiritual life to which through him all true believers are begotten.

But although the great truth of the sacrificial character of Christ's death be wrapped up in such utterances, it is not that aspect of it which represents it as satisfying the claims of justice, or removing governmental obstacles to the exercise of mercy, which is here set forth, but that which views it as quickening and sustaining a new spiritual life within dead human souls. In words whose very singularity and reiteration should make them sink deep into our hearts, our Saviour tells us that until by faith we realize, appropriate, confide in him, as having given himself for us, dying that we might live, until in this manner we eat his flesh and drink his blood, we have no life in us. Our true life lies in union with and likeness unto God, in peace with him, fellowship with him, harmony of mind and heart with him, in the doing of his will, the enjoyment of his favor. This life that has been lost we get restored to us in Christ. "He that hath the Son hath life." We begin to live when we begin to love, and trust, and serve, and submit to our Father who is in heaven; when distance, fear, and doubt give place to filial confidence. We pass from death unto life, when out of Christ there floweth the first current of this new being into our soul. The life that thus emanates from him is ever afterwards entirely dependent upon him for its maintenance and growth.

Every living thing craves food. It differs from a dead thing in this, that it must find something out of itself that it can take in, and by some process more or less elaborate assimilate to itself; using it to repair the waste of vital energy, to build up the life into full maturity and strength. Such a thing as a self-originated, self-enclosed, self-supporting life you can find nowhere but in God. Of all the lower forms of life upon this earth, vegetable and animal, it is true that by a blind, unerring instinct each seeks and finds the food that suits it best, that is fitted to preserve, expand and perfect. It is the high but perilous prerogative of our nature that we are left free to choose our food. We may try, do try—have we not all tried, to nourish our souls upon that which does not and cannot satisfy?

Business, pleasure, society, wealth, honor—we try to feed our soul with these, and the recurrent cravings of unfilled hearts tell us that we have been doing violence to the first laws and conditions of our nature: a nature that refuses to be satisfied unless by an inward growth in all goodness, and truth, and love, and purity, and holiness. It is to all of us, as engaged in the endless fruitless task of feeding with the husks of the earth a spirit that pants after the glory, the honor, and the immortality of the heavenly places, that Jesus comes saying, “Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not?” “I am the bread of life; my flesh is meat indeed, my blood is drink indeed.”

Bread is a dead thing in itself; the life that it supports it did nothing to originate. But the bread from heaven brings with it the life that it afterwards sustains. Secret and wonderful is the process by which the living organism of the human body transmutes crude dead matter into that vital fluid by which the ever-wasting frame is recruited and reinvigorated. — More secret, more wonderful the process by which the fulness of life and strength and peace and holiness that lie treasured up in the living Saviour passes into and becomes part of that spiritual framework within the soul which groweth up into the perfect man in Christ Jesus. In one respect the two processes differ. In the one it is the inferior element assimilated by the superior, the inorganic changed into the organic by the energy of the latter; in the other, it is the superior element descending into the inferior, by its presence and power transmuting the earthly into the heavenly, the carnal into the spiritual. There are forms of life which, derivative at first, become independent afterwards. The child severs itself from the parent, to whom it owes its breath, and lives though that parent dies. The bud or the branch lopped off from the parent stem, rightly dealt with, lives on though the old stem wither away. But the soul cannot sever itself from him to whom it owes its second birth. It cannot live disjointed from Christ, and the life it derives from him it has all the more abundantly in exact proportion to the closeness, the constancy, the lovingness of its embrace of and its abiding in him.

Closer than the closest of all earthly bonds is the vital union of the believer with Christ. One roof may cover those who are knit in the most intimate of human relationships. But beneath that roof, within that family circle, amid all the endearing intercourse and communion, a dividing line runs between spirit and spirit; each dwells apart, has a hermit sphere of its own to which it can retire, into which none can follow or intrude. But what saith our Lord of the

connection between himself and each of his own? "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." He opens himself to us as the hiding-place, the resting-place, the dwelling-place for our spirit. We flee unto him, and he hides us in the secret of his presence, and keeps us secretly in that pavilion. What a safe and happy home! How blest each spirit that has entered it! But more wonderful than our dwelling in him is his dwelling in us. What is there in us to attract such a visitant? what room within our souls suitable to receive him? Should he come, should he enter, what kind of reception or entertainment can we furnish to such a guest? Yet he comes—he deigns to enter—he accepts the poor provision—the imperfect service. Nay, more: though exposed to many a slight, and many an open insult, he still waits on; has pity, has patience, forgets, forgives; acts as no other guest in any other dwelling ever acted but himself. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." "If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

To a still higher conception of the intimacy of the union between himself and his own does Jesus carry us: "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me shall live by me." It would seem as if all the earthly imagery elsewhere employed—that of the union of the branches with the vine, of the members with the head, of the building with the foundation-stone—however apt, were yet defective; as if for the only fit, full emblem Jesus had to rise up to the heavens to find it in the closest and most mysterious union in the universe, the eternal, inconceivable, ineffable union between the Father and himself—"That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one."

There is a resemblance approaching almost to a coincidence between the language used in the synagogue of Capernaum and that used in the upper chamber at Jerusalem. "The bread that I will give," Jesus said to the promiscuous audience of Galileans, "is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." "Take, eat," such is his language in instituting the supper; "this is my body broken"—or as St. Luke has it—"given for you." In either case the bread turns into the flesh or body of the Lord. There had been no wine used in the feeding of the five thousand, and so in the imagery of the synagogue address, borrowed obviously from that incident, no men-



tion of wine was made. There was wine upon the supper-table at Jerusalem, and so, just as the bread which was before him was taken to represent the body, the wine was taken to represent his blood. That eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood, of which so much was said at Capernaum, Jesus, in instituting the ordinance of the Supper, taught his disciples to identify with a true union with himself. So close is the correspondence that many have been led to think that it was to the Eucharist, and to it exclusively, that Jesus referred in his Capernaum address. We cannot tell all that was then in our Saviour's thoughts. It may have been that in imagination he anticipated the time when he should sit down with the twelve. The holy communion may have been in his eye as he spake within the Galilean synagogue. But there is nothing in what he said which points to it alone. He speaks of the coming to him, the believing in him, as the eating of the bread which is his flesh. He speaks of spiritual life owing its commencement, as well as its continuance, to such coming, such believing, such eating. Is it in the ordinance of the Supper, and in it alone, that we so come and believe, eat and live? Is there no finding and having, no feeding upon Christ but in the holy sacrament? Freely admitting that to no season of communion, to no spiritual act or exercise of the believer, do the striking words of our Lord apply with greater propriety and force than to that season and that act, when together we show forth the Lord's death till he come again, we cannot confine them to that ordinance.

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## XII.

### PHARISAIC TRADITIONS—THE SYROPHENICIAN WOMAN.\*

THE Pharisaic party was well organized, watchful, and intolerant. Its chief seat was in the capital, but it kept up an active correspondence with and had its spies in all the provinces. Its bitter hostility, aiming at nothing short of his death, which had driven Jesus from Jerusalem, tracked his footsteps all through his Galilean ministry. At an early period of that ministry, Pharisees from Jerusalem are seen obtruding themselves upon him, and now as it draws near its close another company of envoys from the capital appears. They come down after the Passover, inflamed by the reports carried up to the feast of the open rupture that had taken place between Christ and their brethren in Galilee. They come to find out some-

◦ Matth. 15 : 1-28 ; Mark 7 : 1-30.

thing to condemn, and they have not long to wait. Watching the conduct of Christ and his disciples, they notice what they think can be turned into a weighty accusation against him before the people. Seizing upon some opportunity, when a considerable audience was present, they say to Jesus, "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread." The oral or traditional law, with its multiplied precepts and manifold observances which had grown up around the written code, had come to be regarded as of equal, nay, in some respects, of superior importance. It was the wine, the rulers said, while the other was but the water. The acknowledgment of its authority forming the peculiar distinctive badge of Pharisaism, such a weight was attached to its observance that breaches of it were looked upon as greater sins than breaches of the written law. Among these was that of eating with unwashed hands. What with Persians, Greeks, and Romans was but a social custom, the neglect of which was only a social offence, had been raised among the Jews by the traditions of the elders into a religious duty, the neglect of which was an offence against God. And so strict were they in the observance of the duty, that we read of a Jew of the Pharisaic type who, being imprisoned and put on a short allowance of water, chose rather to die than not to apply part of what was given to the washing of his hands before eating. We can have now but an imperfect conception of how great the sin was then thought to be with which those Pharisees from Jerusalem charged publicly our Lord's disciples, aiming their real blow at him by whose precept and example they had been taught to act as they had done. "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread." No explanation is given—no defence of his disciples is entered upon. Our Lord has ceased to deal with such questioners as being other than malignant enemies. He answers their question only by another—"Why do ye transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" And as they had specified an instance in which the traditions of the elders had been violated by his disciples, he in turn specifies an instance in which they, by their traditions, had nullified a commandment of God. No human duty was of clearer or more stringent obligation than that by which a child was bound to honor, love, and help his father and his mother. The command enforcing the duty stood conspicuously enshrined among the precepts of the Decalogue. But the elders in their traditions had found out a way of reading it by which the selfishness, or the covetousness, or the ill-will of a child might not only find room for exercise, but might cloak that

exercise under a religious garb. All that one, who from any evil motive desired to evade the obligation of assisting his parents, had to do, was to say "Corban" over that property on which his parents might be supposed to have a claim—to declare it to be consecrated, bound over to the Lord—and he was free. Father or mother might no longer ask or hope for any thing at his hands. The property might still be his. He might enjoy the life use of it; but the vow that destined it to God must come in before every other claim. So it was that these traditionalists among the Jews of old quenched the instincts of nature, gave place to evil passions, and broke one of the first and plainest of the divine commands, all under a pretence of piety. Nor has the spirit by which they were animated in doing so ceased to operate; nor have we far to go before an exact parallel can be found to the Jewish Corban practice, in the conduct of those who, passing by their nearest relatives, whose very poverty supplies, it may be, one of the reasons why they are overlooked, bequeath exclusively to charitable or religious purposes the money that they cannot carry with them to the grave. Neither charity nor piety, however broad or pretentious the aspects they take, the services that they may seem to render, can ever excuse such a trampling under foot of the primary ties of nature and the moral duties connected with them. And upon all those hospitals, and colleges, and churches that have been erected and endowed by funds unnaturally and improperly alienated from near and needy relatives, we cannot but see that old Jewish word Corban engraved, and beneath it the condemning sentence of our Lord—"Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect."

No further answer will our Lord give to the Pharisees than this severe retort. But first to the multitude, and afterwards to his disciples, he will say a word or two of that wherein all real defilement consists—not in the outward, but in the inward; its source and seat within, and not without. In the evil affections, desires, and passions of the heart—in these and what comes out of them pollution lies; not in eating with unwashed hands, nor in the violation of any mere external, conventional, traditional usage.

Jesus had rolled back upon the Pharisees a weightier charge than they had brought against his disciples. He had not hesitated openly to denounce them to the people as hypocrites, applying to them the words of the prophet, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." They were offended at being spoken to in such a way. Shunning any further outbreak of their wrath, seeking elsewhere now the

rest and the seclusion that he had sought in vain on the eastern side of the lake, Jesus retired to the borders of Tyre and Sidon. He went there not to teach nor to heal, but to enjoy a few days' quiet and repose in the lonely hilly region which looks down upon the two ancient Phœnician cities. But he could not be hid. The rumor of his arrival in the neighborhood passed over the borders of the Holy Land. It reached a poor afflicted mother—a widow, it may have been—whose little daughter was suffering under the frightful malady of possession. This woman, we are told, was a Greek, a Syrophœnician by nation—a Canaanite. Phœnician was the general name given to a race whose colonies were widely spread in very ancient times. One division of this race occupied the country from which they were driven out by the Israelites; and as that country bordered upon Syria, they were called Syrophœnicians by the Greeks and Romans. It was to this tribe that the woman belonged. She was a daughter of that corrupt stock whom the Jews were commissioned to exterminate. But besides being by nation a Canaanite, she was a Greek; this word describing not her country, but her creed. She was a heathen, an idolatress—all such, of whatever country, being then called Greeks by the Jews. Such then, by birth, by pedigree, by religious faith and profession, was this woman, the first and only Gentile—a Canaanite besides—who made a direct personal appeal for help to Christ. The only case of a like kind that meets us in the Galilean ministry was that of the Roman centurion. But he was half a Jew. Moreover, living among Jews, he had his case presented to Jesus by the rulers of the Jews, who had the plea to offer on his behalf, that he loved their nation, and had built them a synagogue. Here, however, is a Gentile living among Gentiles, who has no Jewish friends to intercede for her, no services rendered to the Jewish people to point to. It is a pure and simple case of one belonging to the great world of heathendom coming to Jesus. How is she received? Her case, as she presents it to his notice, is of the very kind that we should have said he would be quickest to sympathize with and relieve. Meeting him by the way, she cries out in all the eagerness of passionate entreaty, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." Jesus had opened willingly his ear to the nobleman of Capernaum pleading for his son; to Jairus pleading for his daughter; the very sight of the widow of Nain weeping over the bier of her only son had moved him, unasked, to interfere. Here is another parent interceding for a child. And that child's condition is one of the most pitiable—in the tender years of girlhood visited with the most frightful of all



maladies in one of the worst of its forms—grievously tormented with a devil. Such a mother, in the agony of such a grief, crying out to him to have compassion upon her and upon her poor afflicted child, will surely not have long to wait. But he hears as though he heard not. He answers her not a word. The kindest of men are not always equally open-eared, open-hearted, or open-handed to the tale of sorrow. Take them at some unlucky moment, and a cool or a rough reception may await the most urgent of appeals. Has any thing like this happened to our Lord? Has his spirit been fretted with that late contention with the Pharisees, wearied and worn with the kind of reception his own had given him, so that ear and heart and hand are all for the time shut up against this new and unexpected appeal of the stranger? It cannot be. Liable as he was to all common human frailties, our Lord was subject to no such moral infirmity as that. Disappointment, chagrin, disgust never operated upon him as they do so frequently on us—never quenched the benevolence of his nature, nor laid it even momentarily asleep. We must look elsewhere for the solution of the mystery of the silence—for mystery it was. The disciples noticed it with wonder. Their Master had never acted so since they had joined him—had never treated another as he is treating the Canaanite. But though her cry be thus received, making apparently no impression, moving him to no response, she follows, she repeats her cry; continues crying till, half in real pity for her and half with the selfish wish to be rid of her importunity, the disciples came to him saying, “Send her away, for she crieth after us.” Not that they wanted her to be summarily dismissed, her request ungranted. Christ’s answer to this application shows that he did not understand it in that sense; that he took it as expressive of their desire that he should do what she desired and then dismiss her.

A rare thing this in the history of our Saviour, that he should even seem to be less tender in his sympathy for the afflicted than his disciples were, that he should need to be importuned by them to a deed of charity. But all is rare here; rare his silence, rare their entreaty, and rare too the next step or stage of the incident. Still heedless of the woman—neither looking at her nor speaking to her, nor apparently feeling for her—Jesus answers his disciples by saying to them, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” He gives this as his reason for paying no attention to this Gentile’s request. And it is so quietly and calmly said, that it looks like the expression of a firm and settled purpose. The poor suitor hears it. Does it not at once and for ever quench all hope within her

breast? His silence might have been due to the absorption of his thoughts with other things. It might be difficult to win the attention or fix it on one who had so little claim on his regard. But now she knows that he has heard, has thought of her, but wilfully, deliberately, as it would seem, has waved her suit aside. Child of a doomed, rejected race, well mightest thou have taken the Saviour's words as a final sentence, cutting off all hope, sending thee back without relief to thy miserable home, to nurse thy frenzied child in the arms of a dull despair. But there was in thee a depth of affection for that poor child of thine, and a tenacity of purpose that will not let thee give up the case till effort after effort be made. There is in thee, more than this, a keenness of intelligence, a quickness to discern, that, adverse as it looked, an absolute refusal did not lie wrapped up in the Saviour's utterance. He is not sent to any but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; but does that bind him to reject the stray sheep of another fold, if perchance it may flee to him for succor? He comes as a servant, with instructions to confine his personal ministry to the children of a favored race. But is he not a son too as well as a servant? Are his instructions so binding that in no case he may go by a hand's-breadth beyond their line, when so going may serve to further the great objects of his earthly mission? She will try at least whether she cannot persuade him to do so. Undauntedly she follows him into the house into which she sees that he has entered, casts herself at his feet, and says, "Lord, help me!" Before, she had called him Son of David, had given him the title that, from intercourse with Jewish neighbors, she knew belonged to him as the promised Messiah. But now she drops this title. As the Son of David, he was not sent but to the Jews. She calls him, as she worships, by the wider name, that carries no restriction in it, gently intimating that as sovereign Lord of all, he might rise above his commission, and go beyond the letter of the instructions he had received. "Lord," she says, as she looks up adoringly, beseechingly, "Lord, help me." She has got him at last to fix his eye upon her. Will he, can he refuse to help? Jesus looks and says, "Let the children first be filled. It is not meet to take the children's meat, and to cast it to dogs." Last and worst repulse. Bad enough to be told that she lay without the limits of his commission; but worse to be numbered with the dogs. Yet still she falters not. She accepts at once the reality, the justice, the propriety of the distinction drawn. In the one household there were the children of the family; there were also the dogs, and it was right that they should be fed at different times on different food. In the great human household differ-

ences of a like kind existed: there were the favored sons of Abraham; there were the outcast children of Ham and Japhet. She neither disputes the fact nor quarrels with those arrangements of divine providence under which a different treatment had been given to them; she takes the lowly place that Christ has given her among the outcast tribes—among the dogs! But have not the dogs and the children all one master? Do they not dwell all beneath one roof? May not even the dogs look for some little kindnesses at their master's hands? The finest and the choicest of the food it is right that the children should have, but are there no fragments for them? "Truth, Lord," she says, venturing in the boldness of her ardent faith to take up the image that Jesus had used or had suggested, and to construct out of it an argument, as it were, against himself—"Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table."

'Truth, Lord, but thou art the Master; and there dwells in thee such a kind and loving heart, that I will not believe—no, not though thine own words and deeds may seem to declare it—that the meanest creature in thy household will be overlooked or unprovided for. Truth, Lord, I am not a child, and I ask not, expect not, deserve not a child's favor at thy hands. I am but as a dog before thee, and it is no part of the children's food; it is but a crumb from thy richly furnished table that I crave; and what but such among all the rich and varied blessings that thou hast come to lavish upon thine own—what but such would be the having mercy upon the like of me, and healing my poor afflicted child?' The Saviour's end is gained. It was a peculiar case, and Christ had met it in a peculiar fashion. He was about, still more distinctly and conspicuously than he had done in the case of the Roman officer, by act and deed of his own hand, to unfold the mystery that had been hid for ages, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs with the Jews of the great spiritual inheritance of his purchase. In doing so he desired to make it patent upon what ground and principle the door of entrance was to be thrown open. Here was a Canaanitish woman applying to him for help. The curing of her daughter was to be the token that however limited for the time his own personal ministry was to be, it was not to be fixedly and forever exclusive in its character—confined alone to Jews. Here was a Canaanitish woman about to be numbered with those on whose behalf his divine power went forth to heal. To vindicate her admission within the sphere of his gracious operations, it was to be made manifest that she too, by faith, was a daughter of faithful Abraham. Therefore it was that her faith was subjected to such repeated trial, that impediment after impediment was thrown before it, that it might

be thoroughly tested, and come forth from the ordeal shining in the lustre of the fullest and brightest manifestations.

— “O woman,” said Jesus to her, when the trial was over and the triumph complete, “O woman, great is thy faith!” Many things besides had there been to commend in her—her strong maternal love, her earnestness, her importunity, her perseverance, her deep humility. Over all these the Saviour passes, or rather he traces them all up to their common root—her faith in him, her trust under all discouragements, in front of all difficulties, in opposition even to his own words and acts; her trust in his good will to her, in his disposition to pity and to help. This is what he commends, admires. Two instances only are recorded in which Jesus passed such an approving judgment, and looked with such admiring regard upon the faith of those who came to him; and it is remarkable that they are those of the two Gentiles—the Roman centurion and the Syrophœnician woman. “Verily,” said he of the one, “I have not found so great faith; no, not in Israel!” “Woman,” said he to the other, “great is thy faith.” Great faith was needed in those who were the first to force the barrier that ages had thrown up between Jew and Gentile, and great faith in these instances was displayed. Of the two, however, that of the purely Gentile woman was the highest in its character and the noblest in its achievements. The Roman’s faith was in the unlimitedness of Christ’s power—a power he believed so great that even as he said to his soldiers, “Go!” and they went; “Come!” and they came; “Do this!” and they did it—so could Jesus say to disease and life and death; curing at a distance! saving by the simple word of his power! The faith of the Canaanite was not simply in the unlimited extent of Christ’s power. His power she never for a moment doubted. He had no reason to say to her, ‘Believest thou that I am able to do this?’ But his willingness he himself gave her some reason to doubt. Thousands placed as she was would have doubted—thousands tried as she was would have failed. Which of us has a faith in Jesus of which we are quite sure that it would come through such a conflict unscathed? In her it never seems for a moment to have faltered. In spite of his mysterious, unexampled silence—of the explanation given of the silence that appeared to exclude—beneath the sentence that assigned her a place among the dogs, her faith lived on, with a power in it to penetrate the folds of that dark mantle which the Lord for a short season drew around him—to know and see that behind the assumed veil of coldness, silence, indifference, repulse, reproach, there beat the willing, loving heart, upon whose boundless benevolence she casts herself, trusting,



and not being afraid. This was her confidence, that there was more love to her in his heart than the outward conduct of Jesus might seem to indicate. It was this confidence which sustained her from first to last. It was this confidence which carried her over all the obstructions thrown successively before her. It was this confidence which sharpened her wit, and gave her courage to snatch out of Christ's own hand the weapon by which her last and greatest victory was won. It was this confidence in him, in spite of all adverse appearances, which pleased the Lord so much—for he likes, as we all do, to be trusted in—and which drew from him the unwonted expression at once of approval and of admiration, "O woman, great is thy faith!" It is the same kind of simple trust in Jesus that we all need; and in us too, if we but had it in like degree, it would accomplish like blessed results. What the silence and the sentences of Jesus were to that entreating woman, crying after Jesus to have her poor child cured, his ways and his dealings, in providence and in grace, are to us crying after him for the healing of our own or others' spiritual maladies. We cry, but he answers not a word; we entreat, but he turns upon us a frowning countenance; when he speaks, his words seem to cut us off from comfort and from help. But deal as he may with us, hide himself as he may, speak roughly as he may, let us still believe that there exists in the heart of our Redeemer a love to us, upon which we can at all times cast ourselves in full, unbounded trust.

"Woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."

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### XIII.

#### THE CIRCUIT THROUGH DECAPOLIS.\*

WE have now to follow Jesus through one of the most singular of his journeyings. His work in Galilee was done, but some days were still left ere he set his face to go up to Jerusalem. These days were devoted to a circuit which carried him in a semicircle round the western, northern, and eastern boundaries of Galilee, keeping him outside the jurisdiction of Herod, and beyond the reach of the Jewish hierarchy. He was seeking for rest, seclusion, security, and he found them where neither the mistaken attachment of his friends, nor the hate of his enemies in Galilee, were likely to follow him. First he travelled

\* Matt. 15:29-39: 16:1-12; Mark 7:31-37; 8:1-26.

over the hilly country that lies to the northwest of the sea of Tiberias. There, as he was passing out of the Galilean territory, he met the Syrophœnician woman, and by the manner of his treatment of her revealed at once the simplicity, humility, tenacity of her faith, and the wide embrace of his own love and power. Crossing the boundary-line that divided Palestine from Phœnicia, passing the ancient city of Tyre, he proceeded northward towards Sidon, getting a glimpse there—it may have been a first and last one—of a country in which some of the most ancient forms of heathenism still subsisted, in the worship of Baal and Astarte. Then, turning eastward, he crossed the southern ridge of Lebanon, descended into the valley of the Leontes, skirted the base of the snow-capped Hermon, and somewhere not far from the sources of the Jordan, entered Decapolis. This was the name given to a large and undefined region which lay around ten cities, to which peculiar privileges were granted by the Romans after their conquest of Syria. All of these, with a single exception, lay to the east and southeast of the sea of Galilee. At length he came upon that sea, touching it somewhere along its eastern shore, not far, it may have been, from the place where he once before, crossing from Capernaum, had landed for a few hours, and where he cured the demoniac of Gadara. At the entreaty of the multitude Jesus had then instantly retired, not suffering the man upon whom the cure had been wrought to accompany him, but directing him to go and tell what had happened to his family and friends. “And he departed,” we are told, “and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him; and all did marvel.” The rumor of that miracle was still fresh, the wonder it had excited had not died away, when, coming through the midst of the coast of Decapolis, Jesus sat down upon one of the mountains that overlook the lake. The community through which he had been moving was more than half heathenish, the Jewish faith and worship having but little hold east of the river and the lake. Christ’s appearance for the first time among this rude and essentially Gentile population, and the readiness with which he healed the deaf man that had an impediment in his speech, produced the very effect which in such circumstances might have been anticipated. “Great multitudes came to him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others,” eagerly but somewhat roughly casting them down at the feet of Jesus; wondering as at an altogether new sight, beyond measure astonished when they saw the dumb made to speak, and the blind to see, and the lame to walk, and glorifying, not any of their own idols, but glorifying the God of Israel, in whose

name and by whose power these great works were done. Matt. 15:30, 31.

Three days they crowded in upon Jesus, till about four thousand men, beside women and children, were around him on the mountain-side. Many of them had come from a distance, and the food that they had brought with them was exhausted. That they might not go fasting away from him, to faint, it might be, on the road, Jesus repeated the miracle he had once wrought before, on the same side of the lake, but at a different season of the year, and for an entirely different sort of people. Among the coincidences and the differences in the narratives which the evangelists have given of these two miraculous feedings of the multitudes, there is one not preserved in our English version. After the five thousand were fed with the five loaves and the two fishes, the disciples, we are told, took up twelve baskets full of fragments. After the four thousand were fed with the seven loaves and the few small fishes, seven baskets full of fragments were gathered. In the Greek tongue there are two different words, describing two vessels of different size and structure, both of which, without any mark of distinction between them, our translators of the Bible have rendered into the English word "basket." It is one of these words which invariably and exclusively is used in describing the first miracle, and the other which is as invariably and exclusively used in describing the second. The employment in the two cases of two different kinds of vessel has thus been distinctly marked and preserved as one of the slighter circumstantial peculiarities by which the two events were distinguished from one another.

The multitude having been fed and sent away, Jesus took ship and sailed across the lake, landing on its western shore between Tiberias and Capernaum. He had scarcely reappeared in the neighborhood in which most of his wonderful works had been wrought, when, once again, in their old spirit of contemptuous challenge, the Pharisees demand that he would show them a sign from heaven. Now, however, for the first time, the Sadducees appear by their side, leaguing themselves with the Pharisees in a joint rejection of Christ—in slighting all that he had already said and done—in counting it insufficient to substantiate any claim on his part to be their Messiah, and in demanding the exhibition of some great wonder in the heavens, such as, mis-reading some of the ancient prophecies, they falsely thought should precede Christ's advent. Saddened and vexed, with a word of stern rebuke to the men who stood tempting him, and a deep sigh heaved over the whole village to which they belonged, Jesus abruptly departed, embarking in such haste that the disciples forgot

to furnish themselves with the necessary supply of food. As they landed on the other side, Jesus charged them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The pitiful simplicity which they displayed in failing to see what Jesus meant, and in imagining that because he had used the word "leaven," it must be their having failed to bring bread enough with them that he was pointing at, stirred the gentle spirit of their Master, and led him to administer a more than ordinarily severe rebuke, the main weight of which was laid, not upon their stupidity in not understanding him, but in their want of trust, their forgetting how the many thousands had been provided for in the desert and on the mountain-side.

At Bethsaida, to which place Jesus went on his way to Cæsarea Philippi, they brought a blind man to him, and besought him to touch him. This case, and that of the deaf and stammering man brought to him in Decapolis, have many points of resemblance. In both, those who brought the diseased to Jesus prescribed to him the mode of cure. They besought him to lay his hand upon them, or to touch them. Was it for the very purpose of reproving and counter-acting the prejudice which connected the cure with a certain kind of manipulation on the part of the curer, that Jesus in both instances went so far out of his usual course, varying the manner of his action so singularly, that out of all his miracles of healing these two stand distinguished by the unique mode of their performance? This at least is certain, that had Jesus in any instance observed one settled and uniform method of healing, the spirit of formalism and superstition which lies so deep in our nature would have seized upon it, and linked it inseparably with the divine virtue that went out of him, confounding the channel with the thing that the channel conveyed. More and more as we ponder the life of our Redeemer, dwelling particularly on those parts of it—such as his institution of the sacraments—in which food might have been furnished upon which the spirit of formalism might have fed, more and more do we wonder at the pains evidently taken to give to that strong tendency of our nature as little material as possible to fasten on.

Besides, however, any intention of the kind thus alluded to, the variations in our Lord's outward modes of healing may have had special adaptation to the state of the individuals dealt with, and may have been meant to symbolize the great corresponding diversity that there is in those spiritual healings of which the bodily ones were undoubtedly intended to be types. Let us imagine that the deaf stammerer of Decapolis was a man whose spiritual defects were as complicated as his physical ones; whose hard, unclean heart it was sin-



gularly difficult to reach and to renew; who required repeated efforts to be made, and a varied instrumentality to be employed, before he yielded to the power of the truth, or was brought under its benignant sway. Then see with what picturesque fidelity and appropriateness the slowness and difficulty of the one kind of healing was shadowed forth in the other. Jesus took him aside from the multitude, went away with him alone into some quiet and secluded place. The very isolation—the standing thus alone face to face, was of itself fitted to arrest, to concentrate the man's thoughts upon what was about to happen. Then Jesus put his fingers into his ears, as if by this very action he meant to indicate the need there was of an operation which should remove the obstruction, and that his was the hand to do it. Then with a like intent he touched the man's dry and withered tongue with fingers moistened with his own spittle. Then he looked up to heaven and sighed—the sigh unheard—but the look upward, and the emotion which it conveyed, not lost upon the man. Then after all these preliminaries, in course of which we may believe that whatever of incredulity or whatever of unbelief there may have lain within was being gradually subdued, at last he said, *Ephphatha*, and the ears were opened and the tongue was loosed.

Two things here were peculiar, the sigh and the preserving the old Aramaic word which Jesus used. Never in any other instance but in this, when Jesus was about to heal, did a sigh escape from his lips. What drew it forth here? It may have been that as he drew the man aside and confronted him alone, the sorrowful spectacle that he presented became to the quick sympathies of Jesus suddenly and broadly suggestive of all the ills that flesh is heir to, and that it was over them collectively that the sigh was heaved. Such interpretation of its meaning leaves unexplained why it was this case, and it alone, which acted in such a manner upon the sympathies of the Redeemer. But the sigh may have had a deeper source. If this were indeed a man whose soul was difficult of reach and cure, he may have presented himself to Jesus as the type and emblem of those obstinate cases of spiritual malady, some of which would so long resist the great remedy that he came to the earth to furnish.

After the sigh came the utterance *Ephphatha*, a word belonging to that dialect of the old Hebrew language called the Aramaic, or Syro-Chaldaic, which was then current in Judea. But if that was the language which Christ ordinarily used—in which, for example, the Sermon on the Mount was spoken—why was it that in this and one or two other instances, and in these alone, the exact words which Christ employed are preserved in the evangelic record? It cannot

be the peculiarity or solemnity of the occasion, or the particular emphasis with which they were spoken, that entitled them to be selected and preserved, for we can point to many other occasions in which, had Jesus used Aramaic words, they would have had as good, indeed a better claim to have been preserved. The true explanation of this matter seems to be that it was only upon a few occasions that Jesus did employ the old vernacular tongue—and that he ordinarily spoke in Greek. It has recently, and as I think conclusively, been established by a great variety of proof, that in the days of our Saviour, the Jews knew and spoke two languages; all the grown-up educated population using the Greek as well as the Aramaic tongue. The Greek predominated in the schools, was employed almost exclusively in written documents and by public speakers. It was in this language that Jesus addressed the crowds in the courts of the temple at Jerusalem, and the multitudes on the hillsides of Galilee. We have, therefore, in our Greek New Testament the very words before us which came from the lips of our Redeemer—more sacred, surely, than if they had been translated from the Aramaic, however faithful the rendering. Assuming that Greek was the language ordinarily employed by our Saviour, it would very naturally occur that occasionally he reverted to the old dialect, and that when he did so the words that he used should have been preserved and interpreted. Thus, for instance, in the house of Jairus, Jesus was in the home of a strictly Jewish family, in which the old language would be used in all domestic intercourse, the little daughter who lay dead there having not yet learned perhaps the newly imported tongue. “How beautifully accordant then with the character of him whose heart was tenderness itself, that as he leaned over the lifeless form of the maiden, and breathed that life-giving whisper into her ear, it should have been in the loved and familiar accents of the mother tongue, saying, ‘Talitha, cumi!’ Although dead and insensible the moment before the words were uttered, yet ere the sound of them passed away there was life and sensibility within her. Does not every reader perceive the thoughtful tenderness of the act, and a most sufficient reason why it was in Hebrew and not in Greek that our Lord now addressed her? And do we not also discover a cause why the fact of his having done so should be especially noticed by the evangelist? Are we not thus furnished with a new and affecting example of our Saviour’s graciousness? And do we not feel that St. Mark, the most minutely descriptive of all the evangelists, deserves our gratitude for having taken pains to record it? Softly and sweetly must the tones of that loving voice, speaking in the language of her childhood,

have fallen upon the sleeping spirit of the maiden, and by words of tenderness, no less than words of power, was she thus recalled to life and happiness.”\*

It was perhaps still more natural that Jesus, in addressing the deaf stammerer of Decapolis, should have used an Aramaic word. He was a rude mountaineer. The vernacular was perhaps the only language of which he had any knowledge. At any rate, it was the one to which he had been the most accustomed. It could have been solely with regard to the man himself that Jesus employed the particular term *Ephphatha*. He meant him to hear and understand it. And it was heard, we believe, and understood; for this was not a case in which the faculty of hearing and speaking had never existed or been exercised. So soon as the physical impediments were removed, the man could speak as he had spoken before the loss of hearing had been incurred. When, after all the other signs of the coming cure had been given, the emphatic word was at last pronounced, how wise, how gracious was it that that word—the first heard after so many years—should have been one of his well-known, well-loved mother-tongue!

But let us turn now for a moment to the cure of the blind man at Bethsaida. Here, too, we may believe that there was something special in the spiritual condition of the man meant to be typified by the manner of his cure. In the taking of him by the hand, the leading out of the town, the spitting upon his eyes, and putting his hands upon him, Jesus may have had the same objects in view which he had in acting in a similar manner with the deaf man at Decapolis, and the man born blind in Jerusalem; but there was a singularity that marks this case from all the others. It is the only instance of progress in a cure by half and half, of an intermediate stage in the first instance reached. Jesus asked him if he saw aught. He looked up and said that he saw men as trees walking. He saw them—knew them to be men—noticed and described their motion; but they were shapeless to his eye—looked rather like trees than men. It is this circumstance which leads us to believe that he had not been blind from birth. To endow a man born blind with the full powers of vision requires a double miracle—one upon the bodily organ, restoring to it its powers; one upon the mind, conferring upon it the faculty that in the years of infancy a long education is required to impart. A youth who had been blind from birth was couched by Cheselden; but at first and for some time he could not distinguish one object from another, however different in shape or size. He had

\* See Roberts' "Discussions on the Gospel," pp. 89, 90.

to be told what the things were, with whose forms he had been familiar from feeling, and slowly learned to recognize them. And slowly was it that we all in our earliest days learned how to use the eye, and turn it into the instrument of detecting the forms and the magnitudes and the distances of the objects by which we were surrounded. But here—unless, indeed, we believe that there was a double miracle—so soon as the man got the full power of bodily vision, he knew how to use it, having learned that art before. It pleased the Saviour, however, to convey again its lost powers to the organ of the eye step by step. There was at first a confusion of the outward forms of things arising from some visional defect. That defect removed, all was clear; and the subject of this miracle rejoiced in the exercise of a long-unused and almost forgotten faculty. It stands a solitary kind of cure in the bodily healings of our Lord; but that of which it is the type is by no means so rare. Rather, the rare thing is when anything like full power of spiritual perception is at once bestowed. It is but slowly here that the lost power comes back—that the eye opens to a true discernment of the things of that great spiritual world of which we form a part—sees them in their exact forms, in their relative magnitudes, distances, proportions. Even after the inward eye has been purged of all those films which limit and obscure its sight, a long, a careful, a painstaking education is required to train it, as our bodily one in infancy was trained. Nor let us wonder if along the many stages of which this education is made up, we often make singular discoveries of how blind we were before to what afterwards seems clear as day, or that the operations are often painful by which a truer, and a deeper, and a wider spiritual discernment is attained. It is the blessed office of our Saviour at once to restore to the inward eye its power, and to teach us how to use it. Into his hands let us ever be putting ourselves; and let us quietly and gratefully submit to that discipline by which our training in the exercise of all our spiritual faculties is carried on.



## XIV.

## THE APOSTOLIC CONFESSION AT CÆSAREA-PHILIPPI.\*

IN the mythology of the Greeks the worship of Pan—their sylvan deity—was always associated with shady cave or woody grotto. The first Grecian settlers in Northern Syria lighted there upon a spot singularly suited for such a worship—a cave at the southern base of Mount Hermon, and at the northeastern extremity of the valley of the Jordan. This cave lay immediately behind a raised yet retired nook or hollow among the hills, and immediately beneath a conical height of more than one thousand feet, rising between two of those deep ravines which run up into the great mountain, upon the summit of which height there now stand the noblest ruins that the whole country around exhibits; equal in extent, if not in grandeur, to those of Heidelberg—the ruins of the Saracen castle of Zubeibeh. Immediately beneath the entrance into this cave—along a breadth of more than one hundred feet—there gush forth from among the stones a thousand bubbling rills of water, coming from some hidden fountain-head, and from their long, dark, subterranean journey springing all joyously together into the light of day, forming at once by their union a stream which is one of the chief heads or sources of the Jordan. This lively and full-born stream does instantly a stream's best eastern work—clothes its birthplace with exuberant fertility, shadowing it with the foliage of the ilex and the olive; covering its green swards with flowers of every name, turning it into such a scene that, lost in admiration, Miss Martineau declares that, out of Poussin's pictures, she never saw any thing in the least like it, while Dr. Stanley calls it a Syrian Tivoli.

This chosen spot the first Grecian settlers seized upon and consecrated, making the cave Pan's sanctuary, cutting niches for the nymphs out of the solid rock which forms the face of the mountain-side; which niches—the statues that once occupied them gone—are still to be seen there; and called the place Panias, from the name of the deity there worshipped. The Romans, when they came, did not overturn this worship, but they added a new one. Returning to this beautiful nook from having escorted Cæsar Augustus to the sea, Herod the Great erected a fine temple of white marble to his great patron. One of his sons, Herod Philip, in whose territory, as tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis, it was included, extended and embellished

the town which had grown up near the old cavern sanctuary. Thinking to change its name, he called it Cæsarea-Philippi, in honor of the Roman emperor, with his own name added, to distinguish it from the Cæsarea on the seacoast. This new name it bore for a few generations, but the old one revived again, and still belongs to it under the Arabic form of Banias.

It was to this Banias, or Cæsarea-Philippi, that our Lord proceeded, passing through Bethsaida, and up along the eastern banks of the Jordan. In that circuit already described he may have visited it, and the attractions of the place may have drawn him back, or this may have been his first and only visit. It can scarcely be believed that he came into the few scattered villages which lay around, and the remains of which are still visible, without entering Cæsarea-Philippi itself. His presence there, out of Judea, in a district covered with tokens of heathen worship, his standing before that cave, his gazing upon those buildings, those niches, those inscriptions now in ruins and defaced, but then telling, in their freshness, of idolatries still in living power, carries Jesus farther away from Judaism, and brings him into nearer outward contact with Gentile worship than any other position in which we see him in the gospel narrative. It were presumptuous in us, where no clue is given, to imagine what the thoughts and intents of the Saviour were; yet when we find him going so far out of his way, choosing this singular district as the place of his temporary sojourn after all his public labors in Galilee were over; when we reflect further that now a new stage of his ministry was entered on, and that henceforth from teaching the multitudes he withdrew, and gathering his disciples around him in private, began to speak to them as he had never done before, it is impossible to refrain from cherishing the idea that, surrounded now by the emblems of various faiths and worships, types of the motley forms of superstition that had spread all over the earth, the thoughts of the Redeemer took within their wide embrace that world whose faith and worship he had come to purify, and that he had, in fact, purposely chosen, as in harmony with this epoch of his life, and the purposes he was about to execute, the unique, secluded, romantic district of Cæsarea-Philippi.

He was wandering in one of its lonely roads with his disciples, his sole companions, when he left them for a little while to engage in solitary prayer, (Luke 9:18,) to commit himself and his great work, as it was passing into a new stage, to his Father in heaven. On rejoining them, he put to them the question, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" He knew it already, but for a further

purpose he would fain have from their lips what the gross result of those two years' toil and teaching was—what the ideas were about himself, his person, character, and office, which his fellow-countrymen now generally entertained. They told him—more than one of them taking part in the reply—that some said that he was John the Baptist; some that he was Elias; some Jeremiah; some, without determining which, that he was one of the prophets. His own immediate followers had got somewhat further in their conceptions. Listening to and believing in, though not fully understanding the testimony of the Baptist, Andrew had said to his own brother Simon, “We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ;” and Nathanael, remembering what the voice from heaven at the baptism had been reported as declaring, had exclaimed, “Rabbi, thou art the Son of God: thou art the King of Israel.” Here and there, by dumb and blind men and Syrophenician women, he had been hailed as the Son of David or the Son of God. On the first impulse of their wonder at all being miraculously fed, five thousand men were ready in the moment to say of him that he was the prophet that should come into the world. But these were the exceptions—exceptions so rare that they seemed not to his disciples worthy of account. Amid all the variety of impressions made upon them by the discourses and works of our Lord, the great mass of the people in Judea and in Galilee regarded Jesus as the Messiah's forerunner or one of his heralds, not as the Messiah himself. It was the popular belief of the period that, prior to the Messiah's advent, one or other of the prophets was to rise again from the dead. This Jesus might be he. The Pharisees had not succeeded in shaking the public confidence in him as a pure and holy man, well worthy to be counted as a prophet. But they had prevailed in scattering the first impressions that the Baptist's ministry and his own words and deeds had created, that he was indeed the Christ. And now from the lips of his own followers Jesus hears, what was so well fitted to try their faith and their Master's patience, that scarcely anywhere over all the land was there any recognition of the Messiahship of Jesus.

On getting their answer, no word of reproach or complaint escapes the Saviour's lips. It was not indeed on his own account, it was on theirs, that his first question had been put. He follows it with the second and more pointed one: “But whom say ye that I am?” Peter, the ever-ready answerer, replies, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Peter had believed, from the beginning of his connection with him, that Jesus was the Christ; a faith which had the great and acknowledged authority of the Baptist to rest on, and which was

borne up by the hope that the whole nation would speedily accept him as such. But in the Baptist's death, that authority has been violently shaken, and the outward and expected support has utterly given way. Many of the Lord's disciples have forsaken him, and looking all around, Peter can find few now who so believe. Yet, amid all the prevailing unbelief in and rejection of his Master, Peter's faith has been gaining and not losing strength. Like the inhabitants of Sychar, he believed not because of what any one had told him, but upon the ground of what he himself had seen and heard and known of Jesus. "*Thou art the Christ.*" 'Such the Baptist said thou wert—such, though thou hast never expressly put forth the claim—such thy words and works have been ever asserting thee to be—and such thou truly art.' Thus it is that in his good confession Peter suffers not the fickle faith and low conceptions of the multitude to affect him. Though he and his few companions stand alone, with the whole community against them, for himself and for them he will speak out and say, "Thou art"—not any one of those prophets, however honorable the name he bears—"Thou art the very Christ himself—the Messiah promised to our fathers."

But still another step, in taking which Peter not only confronts the existing state of popular belief as to who Jesus is, but goes far on in advance of the existing Jewish faith as to who and what their Messiah was to be. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." We know from sufficient testimony that the Jews universally imagined that their Messiah was to be but a man, distinguished for his virtues and exalted in his office, but still a man. There has dawned on Peter's mind the idea that Jesus the Christ is something more—something higher. The voice from heaven had called him the Son of God; Satan and his host had taken up and repeated the epithet. What that title fully meant we may not, cannot think that Peter now, or till long afterwards, understood; but that it indicated some mysterious indwelling of the Divinity—some mysterious link between Jesus and the Father which raised him high above the level of our ordinary humanity, even when endowed with all prophetic gifts—he was beginning to comprehend. Obscure though his conceptions were, there stood embodied in his great confession a testimony to the mingled humanity and divinity of Jesus. In the faith which thus expressed itself, Jesus saw the germ of all that living faith by which true believers of every age were to be animated—that faith the cherishing of which within its bosom was to form the very life and strength of the community, the Church, which he was to gather out from among the nations—the fruit of God's own work within human



souls. Seeing this, and being so far satisfied—rejoicing in the assurance that whatever other men might think or say of him, there were even now some human spirits within which he had got a hold that nothing could shake, against which nothing would prevail—he turns to Peter and says, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona.” Simon Bar-jona!—the very way in which he named him preparing us for words of weighty import being about to be addressed to him. Simon Bar-jona, *blessed* art thou! I know not if Jesus Christ ever pronounced such a special individual blessing on any other single man; and when we hear one of our race called blessed by him who knows so well wherein the best and highest happiness of our nature consists, our ear opens wide to catch the reason given for such a benediction being pronounced. “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” ‘Thine own eye hath not seen it, thine own ear hath not heard it—it hath not come to thee by any ordinary channel from without—it is not due alone to an exercise of thine own spirit within. Faint though the light be that has gleamed in upon thy soul and lighted up thy faith—faint as the feeblest glimmer of the morn—it is a light from heaven, a dawn giving promise of a bright and cloudless day. It hath come as a revelation from the great Father of spirits to thy spirit, Simon Bar-jona; and therefore a blessed man art thou!’ And blessed still in the Saviour’s judgment—blessed beyond all that this world has in it of blessedness to bestow—is he upon whose darkened mind and heart the faintest rays of that same heavenly light have shone—the God who commanded the light to shine out of the darkness, shining in upon his soul, giving him the light of the true knowledge of God in Christ his Saviour!

“And I say also unto thee.” ‘Thou hast said to me, “Thou art the Christ,” and hast shown that thou knowest what is the true meaning of the word; so now say I unto thee, “Thou art Peter;” the name of my own giving, the fitness of whose application to thee thou art even now justifying in thy prompt and bold confession, in thy full and resolute faith, in thy firm and immovable adhesion to me, despite of all that men think and say of me. Thou art a true *Petros*—a living stone built upon me, the true *Petra*, the living and eternal rock—the only sure foundation in which you and all may build their trust and hopes. And upon thee, as such a stone resting on such a rock, as having so genuine and strong a faith in me as the Son of man and Son of God, I will build my church. Because of this thine early, full, and heaven-implanted faith, thou shalt be honored as one of the first foundation-stones on which my church shall be erected. That church

shall be the congregation of men who share thy faith—who all are Peters like thyself—all living stones built upon me as the chief corner-stone; and in a sense, too, built upon thee; on prophets and apostles as laid by me and on me, to form the basis of the great spiritual edifice—the temple of the church.’

But if the church was to consist of those who believed in Jesus as Peter did, where was the promise that it should number many within its embrace? What the security that it should have any firm or lasting hold? Was not Jesus at this moment a wanderer—despised and rejected—driven forth from among his own—surrounded in this place of his voluntary exile among the Gentiles by a few poor fishermen? Where was the earthly hope that the circle of true believers in him should widen? What the prospect that if it did, it could hold its ground against all the gathered enmity that was rising to pour itself out against it? Calmly, out of the midst of all these unpropitious and unpromising appearances, the words issue from the lips of Jesus, “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” The history of eighteen centuries has confirmed the truth of the saying. So long has this society of Christian men existed; and though it has done much to provoke hostility, and been often very unmindful of the spirit and will of him whose name it bears, yet all that power and policy, the wildest intrigues and the fiercest persecution could do against it, have been done in vain.

This is the first occasion on which Jesus used that word—the church; and he named it in his own lifetime but once again. He did every thing to lay the true and only foundation of that church; but he did almost nothing with his own hand to erect or organize it. Apart from his selecting twelve men to be his personal associates, his institution of the office of the apostolate, which there are but few who regard as an integral and perpetual part of the church’s organization—apart from that and his appointment of the two sacraments, Jesus may be said to have done nothing towards the incorporation of those attached to him into an external institute. Even here, when he goes to address a few words of encouragement to Peter, upon whom so important services in this department were to devolve, he speaks not of the present but of the future: “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” ‘When that time comes at which, on the great day of Pentecost, the first admissions into my church by baptism shall take place, then know that the keys of my kingdom are in thy hand, and that thou mayest use them in the full assurance that thou art not acting without a due warrant.’ Keys are the badges of authority and power and trust, bestowed as the symbols of the office

on ministers or ambassadors, secretaries or treasurers of kingdoms; on whom the duty lies of admitting to, or excluding from, the privileges and benefits of the commonwealth, disposing or withdrawing the royal bounties and favor. Such keys—in a manner appropriate to the kind of commonwealth the church is—Jesus here commits to Peter, as one of the first and greatest of its office-bearers. In the use of any such authority and power as had been given him within the church—in admitting to or excluding from its privileges—in taking his part in the baptism of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost—in condemning Ananias and Sapphira—in censuring Simon Magus—in opening the door to take in the Gentile converts, and presiding at the baptisms in the household of Cornelius—Peter might be weighed down by the sense of the feebleness of the instrument he was using, the smallness of the effects that it could produce. To comfort and encourage him in the use of the keys when they came to be employed by him, Jesus adds, “Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” ‘Act but in the right spirit—follow out the directions given—let the law of truth and love but regulate your doings, and you may rest assured that doings of yours on earth shall be approved and ratified in heaven.’ So far, and no farther, as it seems to us, do the words of our Saviour, as addressed to Peter, go. You are aware that it is upon these words—and upon them almost exclusively, for there is no other passage of any thing of a like import in the evangelic narrative—the church of Rome claims for St. Peter and his alleged successors in the see of Rome a primacy or popedom over the universal church of Christ. Upon this claim, so far as it is attempted to be erected upon this passage, I have to remark:

1. It is singular that of the three evangelists who have recorded our Lord’s question to the apostles, and St. Peter’s reply, St. Matthew is the only one who has added that which Jesus said to him after his good confession had been made. Had our Lord’s object in putting the question been to elicit the confession in order thereupon to confer certain peculiar honors and privileges upon St. Peter above all the other twelve, would St. Mark and St. Luke have stopped short as they do at the confession, and said not a word about Peter and the rock—the keys and the kingdom? It is quite true that in many a narrative two of the evangelists omit what the third has recorded; but it is never true, as it would be true here if the Roman-catholic interpretation of the passage be adopted, that all three give the initial or introductory part of a narrative, but that one alone supplies that in which the main scope and object of the whole consists.

2. The claim for a primacy of authority over the other apostles, put forward on behalf of St. Peter, rests on the assumption that he, and he exclusively, is the rock upon which the church is said to rest. I will only say, that as a mere matter of exegesis—that is, of interpretation of words—it is extremely difficult to say precisely what the rock was to which Christ alluded. From the beginning, from Jerome and Origen down to our own times, there has been the greatest diversity of opinion. Did Jesus mean to say that Peter himself—individually and peculiarly—was the rock? or was it the confession that he had just made, or was it the faith to which he had given expression, or was Jesus pointing to himself when he spoke of this rock, as he did elsewhere when he spake of this temple—this shrine—in reference to himself? I have already offered the explanation that appears to me the most simple and natural, as flowing not so much out of a critical examination of the words as out of a consideration of the peculiar circumstances and conditions under which the words were spoken; but I cannot say that I have offered that explanation without considerable hesitation—a hesitation mainly arising from the fact which does not appear in our English version, that Jesus used two different words—*Petros* and *Petra*—in speaking as he did to the apostle. A claim which rests upon so ambiguous a declaration can scarcely be regarded as entitled to our support.

3. Whatever ambiguity there may be now to us, there could have been no such ambiguity in the words of Christ to those who heard them. They must have known whether or not Jesus meant to designate Peter as the rock—to elevate him to a peculiar and exalted position above his brethren. And yet we find that three times after this the dispute arises among them which should be the greatest—a dispute which never could have arisen had Jesus already openly and distinctly assigned the primacy to St. Peter—and a dispute, we may add, which never would have been settled as Jesus in each case settled it, had any such primacy been ever intended to be conveyed by him.

4. Even admitting that all that is said here was said personally and peculiarly of Peter, where is the warrant to extend it to his successors? If his associates, his fellow-apostles, be excluded, how can his successors be embraced? It is ingeniously said here by Romanists that if St. Peter be the foundation of the Church, then as that foundation must abide, there ever must be one to take his place and keep up as it were the continuity of the basis of the building. But this is to have, not one stone as the foundation, but a series of stones laid alongside or upon one another; and where is there a hint of such a thing?



Fifthly, and chiefly. All that is said here to Peter was said twice afterwards by Christ to all the twelve and to all the church. You have but to turn to the eighteenth chapter of St. Matthew, and read there the eighteenth and nineteenth verses, and to the gospel of St. John, and read there in the twentieth chapter, from the nineteenth to the twenty-third verse, to be fully satisfied that, put what interpretation you may upon the words spoken at Cæsarea-Philippi to St. Peter, they conveyed to him no power or privilege beyond that which Jesus conferred upon the entire college of the apostles, and in its collective capacity upon the church.\*

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## XV.

### THE REBUKE OF ST. PETER.†

JESUS had tested the faith of the apostles. Their reply to his pointed interrogation, "But whom say ye that I am?" was so far satisfactory. They had not been influenced either by the hostility of the Pharisees, or the low and unworthy imaginations of the people. They were ready to acknowledge the Messiahship of their Master, such as they understood it to be, and had risen even to some dim conception of his divinity. They were all ready to adopt the declaration of their spokesman as the expression of their faith, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

But in this faith of theirs there was one great and fatal defect. Neither they, nor any of their countrymen of that age, had associated with the advent of their Messiah any idea of humiliation, rejection, suffering unto death. Obscure he might be in his first appearances, and difficult of recognition; obstacles of various kinds might be thrown in his path, over which he might have laboriously to climb; but sooner or later the discovery of who and what he was would burst upon the people, and by general acclaim he would be exalted to his destined lordship over Israel. One, coming unto his own, and by his own received not; asking not, and getting not, any honor from men; walking in lowliness all his days; a man of many and deeply-hidden griefs, misunderstood by the great mass of the people, despised and rejected by their rulers, taken at last to be judged and condemned as a deceiver of the people, a vilifier of Moses, a blasphemer against God; crucified at last as a malefactor—it had

\* See "The Forty Days after our Lord's Resurrection," pp. 807-810.

† Matt. 16 : 21-28; Mark 8 : 31-38; 9 : 1; Luke 9 : 22-27.

never entered into their thoughts that such a one could be their Messiah. He might suffer somewhat, perhaps, at the hands of his own and Israel's enemies; possibly he might have to submit to death, the common lot of all men; but that he should suffer at the hands of the very people over whom he came to reign, and that by their hands he should be put to death—no throne erected, and no kingdom won—this was not only alien from, it was utterly contradictory to, their conceptions and their belief. Yet all this was true; and from their earlier and false ideas the disciples had to be weaned. Jesus did this gradually. At first, during all his previous converse with them while engaged in his public labors in Judea and Galilee, he had carefully abstained from saying any thing about his approaching sufferings and death. Not that these were either unforeseen or forgotten by him. When alone in the midnight interview with Nicodemus, he could speak plainly of his being lifted up upon the cross as the brazen serpent had been upon the pole in the wilderness, that whosoever looked upon him believingly might be saved. To the people of Judea and Galilee he could drop hints, which, however obscure to his hearers, tell us of a full knowledge and foresight on his part of all that awaited him. He could point to his body as to the temple, which, though destroyed, in three days he should raise up again. He could tell his Galilean audience the sign that was to be given to that generation; that as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, the Son of man should be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. But never till now, in any of his private conversations with his disciples, had he alluded to this topic. He had allowed them to take the natural and full impression which his teaching and miracle-working, and the whole tenor of his life and conversation, were fitted to make upon open, honest, devout-minded men. Their knowledge of him, their faith in him, he had left to grow, till now, as represented in the confession of St. Peter, it seemed strong enough to bear some pressure. They might now be told what it had been out of time to tell them earlier. And if they were to be told at all beforehand of the dark and tragic close, it would seem to be the very best and most fitting occasion to begin, at least, to make the disclosure to them now, when our Lord himself, ceasing from his public ministry, had sought these few days' quiet in the neighborhood of Cæsarea-Philippi, that his own thoughts might be turned to all that awaited him when he went up to Jerusalem. "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples how he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." A few

days after this, as they descended from the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus charged Peter and James and John, saying, "Tell the vision to no man till the Son of man be risen from the dead." A few days later, while they were still in Galilee, passing through it so privately that it evidenced a desire that no man should know it, (Mark 9:30,) Jesus said to his disciples, "Let these sayings sink down into your hearts, for the Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men, and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again." After the raising of Lazarus there was a brief retreat to Peræa, till the time of the last Passover drew on. There was something very peculiar in the whole manner and bearing of our Lord when, leaving this retreat, he set forth on his final journey to Jerusalem. He stepped forth before his disciples, "and they were amazed, and as they followed they were afraid." It was while they were on the way thus going up to Jerusalem, that he took the twelve apart, and said to them, "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished; for he shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles, and they shall mock, and shall scourge, and shall spit upon, and shall crucify him, and the third day he shall rise again." Matt. 20:17-19; Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-34. It thus appears that four times at least before the event—thrice in Galilee and once in Peræa—Jesus foretold with growing minuteness of detail his passion and death; specifying the place—Jerusalem; the time—the approaching Passover; the agents—the chief priests, scribes, and Gentiles; the course of procedure—his betrayal into the hands of the Jewish authorities, his delivery by them into the hands of the Gentiles; the manner of his death—crucifixion under a judicial sentence; some of the accompanying circumstances—the scourging, the mocking, the spitting. Any one placed in the position of Jesus—seeing the rising tide of bitter enmity, and knowing the goal at which it aimed—might have conjectured that nothing short of the death of their victim would appease the wrath of his enemies. But what mere human foresight could have foretold, at Cæsarea-Philippi, that Herod would not anticipate the sacerdotal party, and seize upon Jesus on his way through Galilee, and crown the Baptist's murder by that of his successor? What mere human foresight could have foretold that after so many previous attempts and failures, the one at the next Passover season would succeed; that Jesus would not perish, as Stephen did, in a tumultuous outbreak; that all the formalities of a trial and condemnation would be gone through, and death

by crucifixion be the result? Nor will it help to furnish us with any natural explanation of these foretellings of his sufferings and death by Jesus, to say that he gathered them from the prophecies of the Old Testament, with which we know him to have been familiar, and to which, indeed, even in these foretellings, he pointed; for, much as those prophecies did convey, they fell far short of that particularity which characterizes the sayings of our Lord. Receiving the account of the evangelists as genuine and true, we are shut up to the conclusion that in regard to his passion and death Jesus manifested beforehand a foreknowledge proper only to him who knows all ends from their beginnings; and that still more was this the case as to his resurrection, which he predicted still oftener, and could not have predicted in plainer or less ambiguous terms.

It may for a moment appear strange that the disciples were so taken by surprise when the death and the resurrection of their Master actually took place. How could this be, we are apt to ask ourselves, after such distinct and unambiguous declarations as those which we have quoted? Let us remember, however, that the same authority which instructs us that these predictions were uttered, informs us that they were not understood by those to whom they were in the first instance addressed. "They understood not the saying, and it was hid from them, and they feared to ask him." Luke 9:45. "And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean." Mark. 9:10. The words of Jesus were in themselves easy enough to understand; but was it figuratively or literally they were to be taken? We can scarcely judge aright of the perplexity into which so unexpected an announcement must have thrown the disciples at this stage of their acquaintance with Christ, nor understand how natural it was that they should explain them away. We so often see them, with other and less difficult subjects, taking what he meant literally as if it were figuratively spoken, and what he meant figuratively as if it were to be literally understood—that it takes the edge off our wonder that in this instance the disciples should have hesitated how to take the words that they had heard. The expression, "rising from the dead," the one that appears to have perplexed them the most, appears to us one of the simplest. Yet, when we put ourselves exactly in their position, we begin to see that they had more ground for their perplexity than is at first apparent. A raising from the dead was what they had themselves witnessed. In the general resurrection of the dead they believed. There was nothing, therefore, creating any difficulty in the way of their understanding the mere literal signification



of the phrase—rising from the dead. But the resurrection of Jesus—what could it mean? It could not be his sharing in the general resurrection of all the dead that he was speaking of. But was he to die and to rise and to remain risen? or to die and to rise and to die again? He could raise others from the dead, but if he were to die, who was to raise him? Need we be surprised if, with their notions of who and what their Messiah was to be, the disciples should at times have believed that it was of some spiritual death and resurrection—some sinking into the grave and rising again of his cause and kingdom—that Jesus spoke?

At first, indeed, and before any time for reflecting upon it is given, St. Peter seizes upon the natural meaning of the words that he had heard, and interprets them generally as predicting suffering and death to his Master, and, offended at the very thought of a future so different from the one that they all had anticipated, in the heat of his surprise and indignation, buoyed up, no doubt, by the praise that had just been bestowed upon him, he forgets himself so far as actually to lay hold by arm or garment of our Lord, and in the spirit of a patron, or protector, he begins to rebuke him, saying, “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.” Kindliness in the act and speech; a strong interest in Christ’s mere personal welfare—but ignorance and presumption too; forgetfulness of the distance that separated him from Jesus, and a profound insensibility to the higher spiritual designs which the sufferings and death of Jesus were to be the means of accomplishing. Now let us mark the manner in which this interference is regarded and treated by Christ. He turns about, he looses himself from the too familiar hold, he looks on his disciples as if craving their special notice of what he was about to say and do, and by that look having engaged their fixed regard, he says to Peter, “Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence to me.” What was the secret of the quickness, the sharpness, the stern severity of this rebuke? Why was it that, for the moment, the apostle disappeared as it were from the Saviour’s view, and Satan, the arch-tempter, took his place? Why was it that the very word which our Lord had applied to Satan in the last and greatest of the temptations of the wilderness, is here used again, as if the great tempter had reappeared and renewed his solicitation? It was because he found the feet of Peter had actually stepped upon the very ground that Satan, in his great temptation of our Saviour had occupied. Take all the kingdoms of the world—such had been the bribe held out—take them *now*—save thyself all the toil, the agony—let the cup pass from thee, step into the throne without touching or tasting the bitterness of the

cross. Promptly, indignantly, was this temptation repelled in the wilderness; and when it reappears in the language of his apostle, "Be it far from thee: this shall not be unto thee"—when once again he is tempted to shrink from the sufferings and the death in store for him—as promptly and as indignantly is it again repelled, Peter being regarded as personating Satan in making it, and addressed even as the great tempter had been.

What a difference between the two sayings, uttered within a few minutes of each other! "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence"—or, as the word means, thou art a stumbling-stone, a rock of offence—"unto me." Can it be the same man to whom words of such different import are addressed? Yes, the same man in two quickly succeeding states. Now (to the eye which seeth in secret) he appears as one whose mind the Father hath enlightened, now as one whose heart Satan has filled and occupied; now the object of praise and blessing, now of censure and pungent rebuke. And does not this changing Peter, with those two opposite sides of his character turned so rapidly to Christ, stand a type and emblem of our weak humanity? of the ductile nature that is in the best of the followers of our Lord? of the quick transitions that so often take place within us? our souls now shone upon by the light from heaven, now lit up with fires of another kindling? What lessons of humility and charity do such experiences in the history of the best of men inculcate!

Peter must have been greatly surprised when, shaken off by Jesus, he was spoken to as if he were the arch-fiend himself. Unconscious of any thing but kindly feelings to his Master, he would be at a loss at first to know what sinful, Satanic element there had been in the sentiments he had been cherishing—the words that he had used. It might at once occur to him that he had been too familiar—had used too much liberty with him whom he had just acknowledged to be the Christ, the Son of the living God. But it surely could not be simply and solely because of his being offended at the freedom taken, that Jesus had spoken to him as he did. Some light may have been thrown upon the matter, even to Peter's apprehension at the time, by our Lord's own explanatory words: "Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men." There are two ways of looking upon those sufferings and death, of which, now for the first time, Jesus had begun to speak—the selfish, earthly, human one, and the spiritual, the divine. Peter was thinking of them solely under the one aspect, thinking of them

in their bearing alone upon the personal comfort, the outward estate and condition of his Lord. He would have Jesus avoid them. He himself would stand between them and his Master, and not suffer them to come upon him; inflicting, as he imagined they would do, such great discredit and dishonor upon his name and cause. But he knew not, or forgot, that it was for this end that Jesus came into the world, to suffer and die for sinners; that the cup could not pass from him, the cross could not be avoided, without prophecies being left unfulfilled, purposes of God left unaccomplished, the sin of man left unatoned for, the salvation of mankind left unsecured. He knew not, or forgot, that he was bringing to bear upon the humanity of our Lord one of the strongest and subtlest of all the trials to which it was to be exposed, when in prospect of that untold weight of sorrow which was to be laid upon it in the garden and upon the cross, the instincts of nature taught it to shrink therefrom, to desire and to pray for exemption. It was the quick and tender sense our Lord had of the peculiarity and force of this temptation, rather than his sense of the singularity and depth of Peter's sinfulness, which prompted and pointed his reproof. At the same time he desired to let Peter know that the way of looking at things, in which he had been indulging, had in it that earthly, carnal element which condemned it in his sight. Nay, more; he would seize upon the opportunity now presented, to proclaim once more, as he had so often done, that not in his own case alone, but in the case of all his true and faithful followers, suffering, self-denial, self-sacrifice, must be undergone. He had noticed the approach of a number of the people who had assembled at the sight of Jesus and his apostles passing by their dwellings. These he called to him, (Mark 8:34,) as if wishing to intimate that what he had now to say, though springing out of what had occurred, and addressed in the first instance to the twelve, was yet meant for all—was to be taken up and repeated, and spread abroad, as addressed to the wide world of mankind. 'If any man,' he said, 'whosoever, whatsoever he be, will come after me, be a follower of me, not nominally, but really, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. No other way there was for me, your Redeemer, your forerunner, than by taking up the cross appointed, and on that cross bearing your transgressions; and no other way for you to follow me, than by each of you voluntarily and daily taking up that cross which consists in the repudiation of self-indulgence as the principle and spirit of your life, in the willing acceptance of self-denial as the fixed condition of the new life's growth and progress in your souls, in the crucifying of every sinful affection and desire. "For whosoever will save his life

shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, shall save it." Let it be your main, supreme, engrossing object, to save your life; to guard yourself against its ills, to secure its benefits, its wealth, its honors, its enjoyments—the end shall be that the very thing you seek to save you certainly shall lose. But if from a supreme love to Christ, and a predominating desire to please him, you are willing to lose life, to give up anything which he calls you to give up, the end shall be that the very thing that you were ready to lose, you shall at last and most fully gain. For take it even as a mere matter of profit and loss—but weigh aright what is thrown into the scale, when you are balancing earthly and eternal interests—"What is a man profited if he gain the whole world?" No man ever did so; but suppose he did, imagine that one way or other the very whole, the sum-total that this world—its pursuits, its possessions, its enjoyments, can do to make one happy—were grasped by one single pair of arms into one single bosom, would it profit him, would he be a gainer if, when the great balance was struck, it should be found—that in gaining the whole world he had lost his own soul? that it had been lost to God and to all its higher duties, and so lost to happiness and lost for ever? For if a man once lose his soul, where shall he find an equivalent in value for it? where shall he find that by which it can be redeemed or bought again; what shall he find or give in exchange for his soul? Too true, alas, it is, that, clear though this simplest of all questions of profit and loss be, many will not work it out, or apply it to their own case, content to grasp what is nearest, the present, the sensible, the earthly, and to overlook the more remote, the unseen, the spiritual, the eternal. Too true that what hinders many from a hearty and full embrace of Christ and all the blessings of his salvation, is a desire to go with the multitude; a shrinking, through shame, from any thing that would separate them from the world. Would that upon the ears of such the solemn words of our Lord might fall with power: "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels." Luke 9:26. And at that coming, when the earth and the heavens shall pass away, and we shall find ourselves standing before the great white throne, and in the presence of that vast community of holy beings, how will it look then to have been ashamed of Jesus now? What will it be then to find him ashamed of us, disowning us?

— How strangely must this about the Son of man so coming with power and great glory, have sounded in the ears of those who had



just been listening to him as he told how that he must suffer many things, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Beyond that time of dishonor and suffering and death, predicted as so near, here was another advent of the Son of man, around which every circumstance of glory and honor was to be thrown. But when was that advent to be realized? Of the day and the hour of its coming no man was to know; but this much about it Jesus might even now reveal, that there were some standing then before him who should not taste of death till they saw the kingdom of God set up, till they saw Jesus coming in his kingdom. It could not be of his personal and final advent to judgment that Jesus meant here to speak, for that was not to occur within the lifetime of any of that generation. Those, besides, who were to be alive and to be witnesses of that advent were never to taste of death. Jesus could only mean to speak of such a visible institution of his kingdom as should carry with it a prelude and prophecy of the great consummation. As it is now known that of the twelve apostles John and Philip alone survived the great catastrophe of the destruction of Jerusalem, when the Judaic economy which Christ's kingdom was meant to supersede was set aside, it has been generally believed that it was to that particular epoch or event that Jesus here referred. If we reflect, however, that it was to the general audience by whom he was at the time surrounded, and not exclusively to the twelve, that Jesus addressed these words, we may be the more disposed to believe that it was to the general fact of the open establishment of his kingdom upon earth—that kingdom which was erected on the day of Pentecost, and which came forth more conspicuously into notice when the Jewish ceremonial expired, and it took its place—that our Saviour alluded. Some of those to whom Jesus was speaking at Cæsarea-Philippi were to witness the setting up of this kingdom within the souls of men, and in this setting up were to behold the visible pledge that he would come again the second time, to bring the present economy of things to its close.

Let us apply the saying of our Lord in this way to ourselves. He has a kingdom, not distinguished now by any tokens of external splendor—his kingdom within the soul. Before we taste of death we may, we ought, to know that kingdom, to enter into it, be enrolled as its subjects, be partakers of its privileges and blessings. And if so by faith we see and own our Lord, yielding ourselves up to him as the Christ, the Son of the living God, who has come in the name of the Lord to save us, then when we close our eyes in death, we may do so in the humble confidence that when he comes in his own glory, and

the glory of the Father, and the glory of the holy angels, we shall not be ashamed before him at his coming, and he will not be ashamed of us, but will welcome us into that kingdom which shall never be moved, whose glory and whose blessedness shall be full, unchangeable, eternal.

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## XVI.

### THE TRANSFIGURATION.\*

SIX days elapsed after our Lord's first foretelling of his approaching death. These days were spent in the region of Cæsarea-Philippi and appear to have passed without the occurrence of any noticeable event: days, however, they undoubtedly would be of great perplexity and sadness to the disciples. They had so far modified their first beliefs and expectations, that they were ready to cleave to their Master in the midst of prevalent misconception and enmity. But this new and strange announcement that he must go up to Jerusalem, not only to be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, but to be put to death and raised again the third day, has disturbed their faith, and filled their hearts with sorrowful anxieties—a disturbance and anxiety chiefly, we may believe, experienced by those three of the twelve already admitted by Jesus to more intimate fellowship and confidence. The six days over, bringing no relief, Jesus takes these three “up into a high mountain apart.”

— Standing upon the height which overlooks Cæsarea-Philippi, I looked around upon the towering ridges which Great Hermon, the Sheikh of the Mountains, as the Arabs call it, projects into the plain. Full of the thought that one of these summits on which I gazed had in all probability witnessed the transfiguration, I had fixed upon one of them which, from its peculiar position, form, and elevation might aptly be spoken of as a “high mountain apart,” when casting my eye casually down along its sides as they sloped into the valley, the remains of three ancient villages appeared dotting the base. I remembered how instantly on the descent from the mountain Jesus had found himself in the midst of his disciples and of the multitude, and was pleased at observing that the mountain-top I had fixed upon met all the requirements of the gospel narrative. If that were indeed the mountain-top up to which Jesus went, he never stood so high above the level of the familiar lake, nor did his eye ever sweep so

\* Matt. 17 : 1-13 ; Mark 9 : 2-13 ; Luke 9 : 28-36.

broadly the hills of Galilee. Whichever the mountain was, the shades of evening were falling as Jesus climbed its sides. He loved, we know, the stillness of the night, the solitude of the mountain. He sought them for the purposes of devotion—in the loneliness, the calmness, the elevation, finding something in harmony with prayer. Generally, however, on such occasions he was alone. He either sent his disciples away or separated himself from their society. Now, however, as anticipating what was about to happen, he takes with him Peter and James and John, the destined witnesses of his humiliation and agony in the garden. The sun sinks in the west beneath the waters of the Great Sea as the top of the mountain is reached. Night begins to draw its mantle round them, wrapping in obscurity the world below. Jesus begins to pray. The three, who rest a little space away from him, would join in his devotions, but wearied with the ascent, less capable of resisting the coming-on of night and the pressure of fatigue, their eyes grow heavy till they close in sleep—the last sight they rest on, that sombre figure of their Master; the last sound on their listening ear, the gentle murmur of his ascending prayers. From this sleep they waken, not at the gentle touch of the morning light, not to look down upon the plain below, seen under the beams of the rising day—with stroke of awakening power, a bright, effulgent radiance has fallen upon their eyelids, and as they lift them up, while all is dark below, the mountain-top is crowned with light, and there before them now there are three forms: their Master—“the fashion of his countenance altered”—his face shining as the sun—lit up, not alone, as the face of Moses once was, by the lingering reflection of the outward glory upon which it had gazed, but illumined from within, as if the hidden glory were bursting through the fleshy veil and kindling it into radiance as it passed—his raiment shining, bright as the glistening snow that lay far above them upon the highest top of Hermon—exceeding white, so as no fuller on earth could whiten them; and beside him, appearing too in glory, yet in glory not like his—dimmer and less radiant—their forms, their attitudes, their words all showing that they came to wait on him and do him homage—Moses the lawgiver, and Elijah the reformer and restorer of the Jewish theocracy. Whence came they? In what form did they now appear? How came Peter and James and John at once to recognize them? They came from the world of the dead, the region that departed spirits occupy. Elijah did not need to borrow for this occasion his old human form. He had carried that with him in the chariot of fire—the corruptible then changed into the incorruptible—the mortal having then put on immortality; and now

in that transfigured body he stands beside the transfigured form of Jesus. Moses had died, indeed, and was once buried; but no man knew where nor how, nor can any man tell us in what bodily or material shape it was that he now appeared, nor what there was, if any thing, about the external appearance either of him or of Elijah, which helped the apostles to the recognition. In some way unknown, the recognition came. It was given them to know who these two slining strangers were. It was given them to listen to, and so far to understand, the converse they were holding with Jesus, as to know that they were speaking to him about the decease he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. But it was not given to them either immediately or any time thereafter to report, perhaps even to remember, the words they heard. We must remain content with knowing nothing more about that conversation—which, whether we think of the occasion or the speaker or the subject-matter, appears to us as the sublimest ever held on earth—than generally what its topic was. But of what great moment even that information is we shall presently have to speak. Their mysterious discourse with Jesus over, Moses and Elias make a movement to retire. Peter will not let them go—will detain them if he can. He might not have broken in upon his Master while engaged in converse with them; but now that they seem about to withdraw, in the fulness of his ecstasie delight, with a strong wish to detain the strangers, a dim sense that they were in an exposed and shelterless place, and a very vain imagination that the affording of some better protection might perhaps induce them to stay, and that if they did, they might all take up their permanent dwelling here together, he cannot but exclaim, “Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles;” (three arbors or forest-tents of the boughs of the neighboring trees;) “one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.” Not knowing what he said, the words are just passing from his babbling lips, when the eye that follows the retreating figures is filled with another and a brighter light. A cloud comes down upon the mountain-top—a cloud of brightness—a cloud which, unfolding its hidden treasures, pours a radiance down upon the scene that throws even the form of the Redeemer into shadow, and in the darkness of whose excessive light the forms of Moses and Elias sink away and disappear. This cloud is no other than the Shekinah, the symbol of Jehovah’s gracious presence. From the midst of its excellent glory there comes the voice, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him!”—not Moses, nor Elias, nor any other lawgiver, nor any other prophet—but “hear ye him.” As the apostles hear that voice, they are sore afraid;



the strength goes out of them, and they fall with their faces to the ground. Jesus comes, touches them. The touch restores their strength. He says, "Arise, and be not afraid." They spring up; they look around. The voices have ceased, the forms have vanished, the glory is gone; they are alone with Jesus as at the first.

Such as we have now recited them were the incidents of the transfiguration. Let us consider now its scope and design. In the shaded history of the Man of sorrows, this one passage stands out so unique—a single outburst of light and glory on the long track of darkness—that we look at it with the most intense curiosity; and as we look, the questions start to our lips, Why was it that for that one brief season the brow that was to be crowned with thorns was crowned with glory, the countenance that was to be marred and spit upon shone as the sun, the raiment that was to be stripped off and divided among foreign soldiers became so bright and glistening? Why was it that he who ere long was to be seen hanging up to die between the two malefactors, was now and thus to be seen, with Moses and Elias standing by his side paying to him the most profound obeisance? Why did that clouded glory come down and glide across the mountain-top, and that voice of the Infinite Majesty speak forth its awful and authoritative, yet instructive and encouraging words? In answer to these questions, we must say that we know too little of the world of spirits to take it upon us to affirm or conjecture what it was, so far as they personally were concerned, or the community of which they formed a part, which brought Moses and Elias from their places of abode in the invisible world to stand and talk for this short season with Jesus on the mount. Doubtless the benefit, as the honor, to them was singular and great, involving a closer approach to, a nearer fellowship with Jesus in his glorified state, than was ever made or enjoyed by any other of our race on earth, than may be made or enjoyed even by the redeemed in heaven. But we venture not to specify or define what the advantage was which was thus conferred. We know too little also of the inner history of the human mind of the man Christ Jesus, to say how seasonable, how serviceable this brief translation into the society of the upper sanctuary may have been—what treasures of strength and comfort fitting him for the approaching hour and power of darkness, the solemn announcement of his Sonship by the Father, the declaration of satisfaction with all his earthly work, may have conveyed into his soul. Doubtless here, too, there were purposes of mercy and grace towards the Redeemer subserved, which it is difficult for us to apprehend, more difficult for us fully to fathom. But there is another

region lying far more open to our inspection than either of those now indicated. It is not difficult to perceive how the whole scene of the transfiguration was ordered so as to fortify and confirm the apostles' faith. That it had this as one of its immediate and more prominent objects is evident, from the simple fact that Peter, James, and John were taken up to the mount to witness it. Not for Christ's own sake alone, nor for the sake of Moses and Elias alone, but for their sake also, was this glimpse of the glorified condition of our Lord afforded; and when we set ourselves deliberately to consider what the obstructions were which then lay in the way of a true faith on their part in Christ, we can discern how singularly fitted, in its time, its mode, and all attendant circumstances, it was to remove these obstructions, and establish them in that faith.

— 1. It helped them to rise to a true conception of the dignity of the Saviour's person. The humbleness of Christ's birth, his social estate, the whole outward manner and circumstances of his life created then a prejudice against him and his claims to the Messiahship, the force of which it is now difficult to compute: "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" was the question, not of a captious scribe or a hostile Pharisee, but of an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile. "Is not this the carpenter's son?" was the language of those who had been intimate with him from his birth, when they heard him in their synagogue apply the memorable passage in the prophecies of Isaiah to himself. "Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary, and his brothers, James and Joses, and Simon and Judas; and his sisters, are they not all with us? And they were offended in him." In the case of his own disciples, his character, his teaching, his miracles, his life fully satisfied them that he was that Prophet who was to be sent. Yet the very familiarity of their daily intercourse with him as a man stood in the way of their rising to the loftier conception of his divinity. Besides, had no such incident as that of the transfiguration occurred in the Saviour's history, we can well conceive how at this very stage they might have been thrown into a condition of mind and feeling exactly the reverse of that of their countrymen at large. Blinded by pride and prejudice, the Jews generally would not look at those Scriptures which spoke of a suffering, dying Messiah, but fixing their eyes alone upon those glowing descriptions given by their prophets of the majesty of his person and the glory of his reign, they cast aside at once and indignantly the pretensions of the son of the carpenter. Now, for the first time, the idea of his suffering unto death was presented to the minds of his own disciples. Afterwards they were more fully

instructed out of the writings of Moses and the prophets how it behooved Christ to suffer all these things, and then to enter into his glory. But the glory of which so much had been foretold—that bright side of the prophetic picture—what was it, and when and how was it to be revealed? Here again, just when their faith was widened in one direction, in another it might have begun to falter. To meet all the trials of their position, in mercy to all their weaknesses, one sight was given of the Lord's transfigured form, one visible manifestation of the place he held in the invisible kingdom, one glimpse of the heavenly glory, with Jesus standing in the midst. Sense stretched out its vigorous hand to lay hold of blind and staggering Faith. And long afterwards—thirty years and more from the time that the great manifestation was made—in Peter's person, Faith, when she had got over all her difficulties, and stood serene, secure, triumphant, looked back and owned the debt, and published abroad her obligation, saying, "We have not followed cunningly-devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And this voice we heard when we were with Him in the holy mount."

2. The position which Christ assumed toward the Jewish priesthood and the Mosaic ritual was not a little perplexing—his habitual neglect of some, his open and severe condemnation of other religious observances sanctioned by the highest ecclesiastical authorities, regarded generally as of divine origin and authority, and rigorously observed by all who made any pretensions to piety. He wore no phylacteries; he made no long prayers; neither he nor his disciples fasted; he and they ate with unwashed hands; he sat down with publicans and sinners; in many ways, according to the current ideas, he and his disciples broke the Sabbath; he separated himself from the priesthood; he walked not in their ways; he discountenanced many of their practices; he taught and he practised a religion that made but little of holy rites and outward orderly observances. The religion of the heart, the home, the secret chamber, the broad highway, the solitary mountain-side—a religion that in its heavenward aspects opened a way direct for any sinner of our race to God as his heavenly Father—that in its earthward aspects found its sphere and occupation in the faithful and kindly discharge to all around of the thousand nameless duties of human brotherhood—such a religion the scribes, the Pharisees, the hierarchy, the whole body of the Jewish priest-

hood, disliked; they looked askance upon it and upon its author; took up the tale against Jesus—many of them, no doubt, believing it—and circulated it, that this man was an enemy of Moses, was ill-affected to the law and to the prophets, was an innovator, a revolutionist. To see and hear their Master thus arraigned, and with much apparent reason too, as one throwing himself into a hostile attitude towards all the venerated popular superstitions, must have been not a little trying to our Lord's apostles. But if there entered into their minds a doubt as to the actual inner spiritual harmony between their Master's teaching and that of Moses and the prophets, the vision on the mount—the sight of Moses and Elias, the founder and the restorer, the two chief representatives of the old covenant, appearing in glory, entering into such fellowship with Jesus, owning him as their Lord—must have cleared it away, satisfying them by an ocular demonstration that their Master came not to destroy the law and the prophets—not to destroy, but to fulfil.

3. The manner of Christ's death was, of itself, a huge stumbling-block in the way of faith—one over which, notwithstanding all that had been done beforehand to prepare them, the apostles at first stumbled and fell. And yet one would have thought that the conversation which Peter, James, and John overheard upon the mount, might have satisfied them that a mysterious interest hung around that death—obscure to the dull eyes of ordinary mortals, but very visible to the eyes of the glorified. It formed the one and only topic of that sublimest interview that ever took place on earth. And doubtless, when the apostles recovered from the first shock of the crucifixion, and, under Christ's and the Spirit's teaching, the meaning and object of the great sacrifice for human guilt effected by that death revealed itself, and they began to remember all that the Lord had told them of it, and the seal of silence that had been put upon the lips of Peter, James, and John was broken—when they could not only tell that it was about this decease, and about it alone, that Moses and Elias had spoken to their Lord, but knew now why it was that it formed the only selected topic of discourse—that recalled conversation on the holy mount would contribute to fix their eyes in adoring gratitude upon the cross, and to open their lips, as they determined to know nothing among their fellow-men but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

4. The peculiar way in which Jesus spake of his relationship to God was another great difficulty in the way of faith. It seemed so strange, so presumptuous, so blasphemous, for a man, with nothing to mark him off as different from other men, to speak of God as his



Father, not in any figurative or metaphorical sense, not as any one, every one of his creatures might do, but in such a sense as obviously to imply oneness of nature, of attributes, of authority, of possession. How, against all the counter forces that came into play against it, was a faith in his true sonship to the Father to be created and sustained? They had his word, his character, his works to build upon. But knowing the frailty of that spirit within which the faith had to be built up, God was pleased to add another evidence, even that of his personal and audible testimony. And so, from that cloudy glory which hung for a few moments above the mountain-top, his own living voice was heard authenticating all that Jesus had said, or was to say, of the peculiar relationship to him in which he stood, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye him."

Once before, at the baptism, had the voice of the Father been heard uttering the same testimony—confirming the same great fact or truth. What more could the Father do than break the silence so long preserved, bow the heavens and come down, take into his lips one of our human tongues, and in words that men could understand, thus twice and so solemnly declare that this Jesus of Nazareth—this unique sojourner upon our earth—was no other than his only begotten, his well-beloved Son, to whom, above all others, we were to open our ears—to hear and to believe, to obey and to be blessed? In the shape of mere sensible demonstration, could faith ask a higher, better proof?

What, then, may we not say as we contemplate the single but strong help to faith given in this one brilliant passage of our Redeemer's life? What hath God not done to win the faith of the human family to Jesus Christ as his Son our Saviour? If miracles of wonder could have done it; if lights seen on earth that were kindled before the sun, and forms seen on earth that had passed into the heavens, and the very voice heard on earth that spake and it was done, that commanded and all things stood fast, could have done it, it had been done long ago. But alas! for hearts so slow and hard as ours, we need Christ to be revealed to us by the Spirit, as well as revealed outwardly by the Father, ere to that great saying of his upon the mount we make the right response, looking upon Jesus and saying, "Truly this is the Son of God—my Lord, my God, my one and only Saviour—with whom I, too, am well pleased, and through whom I humbly trust that the Father will be well pleased with me!"



## NOTE.

EXTRACT FROM A JOURNAL KEPT BY THE AUTHOR DURING  
A VISIT TO THE HOLY LAND IN THE SPRING OF THE  
YEAR 1863.

THURSDAY, 23d April.—Our first sight of the Sea of Galilee was from the top of Tabor. The next was during our descent this evening to Tiberias from the elevated ground around Kurun-Hattin. The climate changed sensibly as we descended, and the vegetation altered. We had been under considerable alarm as to the suffocating heat we were to meet with in Tiberias, and the attacks of vermin to which we were to be exposed. Instead of entering the town, or encountering the dreaded enemy in his stronghold, where he musters, we are told, in great force, we pitched our tents in an airy situation on the banks of the lake, where we suffered no annoyance of any kind. How beautiful it was, as the sun went down and the stars shone out, to look upon the waters, and to remember that they were the waters of the Lake of Galilee.

FRIDAY, 24th.—A showery night, trying our tents, which stood out well—but little rain having got entrance. The day cleared up after breakfast, and at eleven o'clock we went on board the boat which we had secured the night before to be at our disposal during our stay here. Rowed along the southwestern shores of the lake. The hills that rise here from the shore are lofty, some of them twelve or thirteen hundred feet high. Landed for a while on a beautiful pebbly beach in a little bay, on the shores of which are scattered the ruins of the ancient Tarichæa. Within the small enclosure of the bay—less than a quarter of a mile across—indenting not more than one hundred yards the general shore-line, Josephus tells us of more than two hundred vessels being gathered for the only naval engagement between the Jews and Romans. What an idea does this present of the former populousness of these now silent and almost boatless waters! Bathed in the lake, and lay on the shore gathering shells. Took boat again, and rowed to the southern end of the lake, where the Jordan leaves it, and, true to its tortuous character, bends right and left as it issues from the lake. Rowed across here, and landed on the eastern shore. We had intended making a minute survey of the southeastern banks, the general belief having so long been that somewhere upon them was the scene of our Lord's cure of the demoniac of Gadara. A careful inspection of what lay quite open to view at once convinced us that it could not have been at any place on the eastern side of the lake south of Wady Fik, which lies nearly opposite Tiberias, that the miracle was wrought, for there is no steep place whatever at or near the lakeside down which the swine could have run violently. For a long way inland the country is level—never rising to any such height as would answer to the description in the gospel narrative. There is a Gadara, indeed, in this neighborhood, but it is at a great distance from the lake. It would take three hours to reach it, and the gorge of the river Jermak intervenes. It cannot have been the Gadara near to which the tombs were, out of which the inhabitants came immediately on hearing what had happened on the lakeside. A single look at Kurbit-es-Sumrah (Hippus) must satisfy

every observer that it could not possibly have been there, nor anywhere in its immediate neighborhood, that the incidents occurred connected with the healing of the demoniac. We rowed back in the evening to our tents, thoroughly satisfied that in this instance the existence of a place called Gadara lying south of the lake had exercised a misleading influence. It remained for us to examine the eastern side of the lake, above the point at which we now left it. This we resolved to do next day. . . .

SATURDAY, 25th.—Rowed across to Wady Fik, the first place along the eastern shore coming up from the south at which the miracle could have been performed. On landing, we asked our boatmen whether there were any tombs in the wady. Their answer was to point us to a very old burying-ground, scarcely a hundred yards from the place where we landed, which told its own story by the stones scattered over it. We scarcely needed to ask whether there were any remains of towns or villages near; for, looking to our right, on the slope of a hill about quarter of a mile off, the ruins of a village were to be seen—a very old village our guide told us it was—its name, as he pronounced it, Kurban, or Dharban, or Goorban, we could not exactly say which. Immediately fronting us was a lofty conical height, with the steepest line of descent we had yet seen. This height was connected by a narrow shoulder of land with the line of hills behind, which here decline so rapidly to the shore, that either along their sides, or down the still steeper side of the semi-detached and conical eminence in the mouth of the wady, the swine may have run. There is indeed a level space, of no great extent, however, between the shore and the bottom of the hills and of this eminence, but it might easily have been that under the impulse of the demoniac possession, and urged by the impetus given in so long and rapid a descent, the swine might have been hurried across the space into the water. There is, in fact, no steep place along the whole eastern shore which runs sheer down into the water. Here, then, in Wady Fik we had enough to satisfy all the requirements of the narrative: tombs so placed that immediately on Christ's landing a man might have come out of them; a mountain near, on which two thousand swine might have been feeding; a height down which they might have run so violently as to be driven into the sea; and a village at hand to which the tidings might easily be carried. It remained for us, however, to visit Wady Semakh—the site fixed on by Dr. Thompson as the scene of the event. Here, too, more than one of the conditions required by the narrative were fully met: on the hillside, to the right of the valley, were caves used formerly as tombs; between us and them, as we stood upon the shore, were the remains of an old village, while away at a considerable distance on our right was a slope of a mountain-side that might have served for the descent. The tombs, however, were too far off. Their position relative to the village scarcely corresponded with the narrative, from which one would naturally infer that the village lay behind—the word needing to be carried to it.

On the whole, after the fairest and fullest comparison we could institute, our decision was that it was in Wady Fik, and not in Wady Semakh, that the incidents of the strange healing occurred.\*

The closer survey, however, that we were now able to make of Wady Semakh, strengthened the impression that eye and glass had conveyed to us—as from the other side we had studied the eastern shores of the lake—that it was in its neigh-

\* See "Sinai and Palestine," p. 350.

borhood that the feeding of the five thousand took place. Let any one run his eye from the entrance of the Jordan into the lake, down the eastern shore, and he will notice that all along the land rises with a gentle and gradual slope ; never till miles behind rising into any thing that could be called a mountain ; never showing any single height with a marked distinction from or elevation above the others, so separate and so secluded that it could with propriety be said that Jesus went up to that mountain apart to pray. Wherever Capernaum was, to pass over from it to these slopes on the northeastern shore traditionally regarded as the scene of the miracle, could scarcely be said to be a crossing over to the other side of the lake. But Wady Semakh presents the very kind of place required by the record of the events. Looking up into it, with high mountains on either side, with lesser valleys dividing them from one another, presenting a choice to any one who sought an elevated privacy on a mountain-top for prayer—and turning our eye upon the many plateaux or nearly level places, carpeted at this season of the year with grass, my companion, Dr. Keith Johnson, and I were both persuaded that our eyes were resting on the neighborhood where the great and gracious display of the Divine power was made in the feeding of the multitude.







CHRIST AND THE SISTERS AT BETHANY

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## THE CLOSE OF THE MINISTRY.

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### I.

#### THE DESCENT FROM THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION.\*

MORNING has dawned upon the mountain-top which had witnessed the wonderful night-scene of the transfiguration. Jesus and the three disciples begin to descend. The silence they at first observe is broken by our Lord turning to his disciples, and saying, "Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead." A few days before, Jesus had straitly charged them that they should tell no man that he was the Christ. The discovery would be premature. The people were not prepared for it. It would come unsuitably as well as unseasonably from the lips of the apostles. It might serve to interrupt that course of things which was to guide onward to the great decease to be accomplished at Jerusalem. And whatever reasons there were for a temporary concealment from the multitude of such knowledge as to their Master's true character and office as the apostles possessed, still stronger reasons were there that they should preserve silence as to this vision on the mount, the narration of which would be sure at that time to provoke nothing but derision. Not even to the other nine were the three to speak of it till the key to its true interpretation was in all their hands, for even by them, in the meantime, it was little likely to be rightly apprehended, and it was not a topic to be rudely handled as a thing of idle and ignorant talk. The seal thus put upon the lips of the three, we have no reason to believe was broken till the time came when they stood relieved from the obligation it imposed. All the more curiously would the matter be scanned by the three when alone. The thing that most perplexed them as they did so, was what the rising from the dead could mean. They did not venture to put any question to their Master. Now, upon the mountain-side, as afterwards, they were afraid to ask him about it, with something perhaps of the feeling of those who do not like to ask more about a matter which it has sad-

\* Matt. 17:9-27; Mark 9:9-32; Luke 9:37-45.



dened them so much to hear about at all; from all fuller and distincter sight of which they shrink.

But there was a question, and that a very natural one in the existing circumstances, which they did venture to put to Jesus by the way. They had just seen Elias standing by the side of their Master, to be with him in that brief interview, and then depart. Was this that coming of the great prophet about which the scribes spoke so much? It could scarcely be so, for that coming was to precede the advent of the Messiah. But if Jesus were the Christ, and this which they had just witnessed were the coming of Elias, the prescribed prophetic order would be reversed. In the uncertainty and confusion of their thoughts they put the question to their Master, "Why say the scribes that Elias must first come?" Jesus had already—months before—on the occasion of the visit of the two disciples of the Baptist, said to them plainly enough, "If ye will receive it, this is Elias which was to come." They had not fully understood or received it. In common with the whole body of their countrymen, their original idea had been, that it was to be an actual return of Elijah himself to the earth which was to be the precursor of the appearance of their Messiah. This conception the sayings of Jesus may have served partially to rectify; but now, when Elijah comes and presents himself before their eyes, it returns, and in returning blinds and confuses them once more. Our Lord's answer is so far clear enough, that he confirms the dictum of the scribes as founded on a right reading of the ancient prophecies, especially of the one by Malachi, recorded in the fourth chapter of that prophet's writings. It was true, what these scribes had said, that Elias must first come. But they were in error when they looked for a personal visit from the old prophet as the precursor of the first advent of Christ. They had failed to see in the person and ministry of John one coming in the spirit and power of Elias. They had taken too hastily the Baptist at his word when he said he was not Elias, as in a literal sense he was not. And, misapprehending his character and mission, they had allowed their natural dislike to such a person and ministry as his to grow until it culminated in that act of Herod by which the disliked preacher of righteousness was cut off. Once more, therefore, does Jesus renew the testimony he had already borne to the Baptist: "I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed." The treatment they gave to the forerunner was no inapt symbol of that which they were preparing for Christ himself, for "likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them."

Then the disciples understood that "he spake unto them of John the Baptist." But did they understand that in his answer to their inquiry our Lord alluded to another, a future coming of Elias, of which that of the Baptist was but a type or a prelude, as well as to another, a future coming of the Son of man with which it was to be connected? Many think that not obscurely, such an allusion lay in the words which Christ employed, and that it is in the two advents each prefaced with its appropriate precursorage, that the full and varied language of ancient prophecy receives alone its fit and adequate accomplishment.

But we must now turn our eye from the little group conversing about Elias, as they descended the hillside, to what was occurring elsewhere, down in the valley, among the villages that lay at the base of the mountain. Among the villagers there had occurred a case of rare and complicated distress. A youth, the only son of his father, had fallen the victim to strange and fearful paroxysms, in which his own proper speech was taken from him, and he uttered hideous sounds, and foamed, and gnashed with his teeth, and was cast sometimes into the fire, and sometimes into the water, from which he was drawn with difficulty, half dead. To bodily and mental distemper, occult and incurable, there was added demoniac possession, mingling itself with, and adding new horrors to, the terrible visitations. With the arrival of Christ and his disciples in this remote region, there had come the fame of the wonderful cures that he had elsewhere effected; cures, many of them, of the very same kind of malady with which this youth was so grievously afflicted. On learning that the company of Galilean strangers had arrived in the neighborhood of his own dwelling, the father of this youth thought that the time had come of relief from that heavy domestic burden that for years he had been bearing. He brought to them his son. Unfortunately, it so happened that he brought him when Christ and his three disciples were up in the mountain, and the nine were left behind. It was to them, therefore, that the application for relief was made. It does not appear that when in company with Christ the disciples were in the habit of claiming or exercising any preternatural power over disease. No case, at least, of a cure effected by their hands in such circumstances is recorded. But in that short, experimental tour, when they had been sent out away from him to go two by two through Galilee, Jesus had given them power over unclean spirits—a power which they had exercised without check or failure. And now, when they are left alone, and this most painful case is brought to them, they imagine that the same power is in their hands, and they essay to exercise it. In their Master's name

again' and again they command" that unclean spirit to go forth, but their words return to them void. They stand baffled and covered with confusion before the crowd that had gathered to witness the cure. They can give no reason, for they know none, why the failure has taken place. Nor are they suffered to skulk away in their defeat. Some scribes are there, ready enough to take advantage of the awkward dilemma into which they have been thrown by assuming an authority which turns out to be impotent—their Master's character involved in their defeat. We can well imagine what an instrument of reproach would be put thus into the hands of these scribes, and how diligently and effectively they would employ it; pressing the disciples with questions to which they could give no satisfactory replies, and turning the whole occurrence to the best account in the way of casting discredit upon the Master, as well as upon his disciples. A great multitude had in the meantime assembled; a profane and scoffing and half-malignant spirit had been stealing into the hearts of many, when Jesus and the three are seen coming down from the hillside. The suddenness of his appearance—his coming at the very time that his disciples were hard pressed, perhaps, too, the very calmness and majesty of his appearance, as some of that glory of the mountain-top still lingers around him—produces a quick revolution of feeling in the fickle multitude. Straightway a kind of awe—half admiration, half alarm—comes over them, and, "greatly amazed," they leave the scribes and the discomfited disciples, and they run to him and salute him—not in mockery, certainly, or hailing him as one whose claims upon their homage they are ready to set aside—but rather with a rebound from their recent incredulity, prepared to pay to him the profounder respect. And now, as on some battlefield which subordinate officers have entered in absence of their chief, and in which they have been worsted by the foe, at the crisis of the day the chief himself appears, and at once the tide of battle turns—so acts the presence of Christ. Bearing back with him the multitude that had run forth to greet him, he comes up to where the scribes are dealing with the apostles, and says to them, "What question ye with them?" The questioners are struck dumb—stand silent before the Lord. In the midst of the silence a man comes forward, kneels down before Jesus, tells him what has happened, how fearful the malady was that had fallen upon his only child, how he had brought the child to the disciples and they had failed to cast the devil out of him. Too much occupied with his own grief, too eager to seize the chance now given, that the Master may do what his disciples could not, he makes no mention of the scribes, or of the hostile feeling against him they have

been attempting to excite. But Jesus knows it all, sees how in all the various regions then around him, in the hearts of the people who speak to him, in the hearts of the disciples from whom he had temporarily been parted, in the hearts of those scribes who had been indulging in an unworthy and premature triumph, the spirit of incredulity had been acting. Contemplating the sad picture of prevailing unbelief, there bursts from his lips the mournful ejaculation, 'O faithless, incredulous, and perverse generation! how long shall I be with you and you remain ignorant of who and what I am? How shall I suffer you, as you continue to exhibit such want of trust in my willingness and power to help and save you?' Not often does Christ give us any insight into the personal emotions stirred up within his heart by the scenes among which he moves—not often does there issue from his lips any thing approaching to complaint. Here, for a moment, out of the fulness of his heart he speaketh, revealing as he does so a fountain-head of sorrow lying deep within his soul, the fulness and bitterness of whose waters, as they were so constantly rising up to flood and overflow his spirit, who can gauge? What must it have been for Jesus Christ to come into such close familiar contact with the misconceptions and incredulities, and dislikes and oppositions of the men he lived among? With a human nature like our own, yet far more exquisitely sensitive than ours to injustice and false reproach, what a constant strain and burden must thus have been laid upon his heart! What an incalculable amount of patience must it have called him to exercise!

The brief lament over the faithless and perverse generation uttered, Jesus says to the father, "Bring thy son hither!" And now follows a scene to which there are few parallels in scriptural or in any other story, for our vivid conception of which we are specially indebted to the graphic pen of the second evangelist. They go for the youth, and bring him. So soon as he comes into the presence of Jesus, and their eyes meet—whether it was that the calm, benignant, heavenly look of Christ operated as a kind of stimulant upon a wornout, weak, unstrung, excitable, nervous system, or that the devil, knowing that his time was short, would raise one last and vehement commotion within that poor distracted frame—the youth falls to the ground, wallowing, foaming, torn by a power he is unable to resist. Jesus looks upon him as he lies, and all who are around look at Jesus, wondering what he will do. Is it easy to imagine a conjunction of outward circumstances more striking or affecting? The youth writhing on the ground, Jesus bending on him a look of ineffable pity, the father standing on the tiptoe of eager expectation, the disciples, the scribes,



the multitude pressing on to witness the result. Such was the season, such were the circumstances that Jesus chose for one of the shortest but most memorable of his conversations. Before he says or does any thing as to the son, he says quietly, inquiringly, compassionately to the father, "How long is it ago since this came unto him?" The father tells how long, and tells how terrible it has been; but as if somewhat impatient at such a question being put at such a time, he adds, "But if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us." Genuine and pathetic utterance of a deep-smitten fatherly affection, identifying itself with the object of its love, and intent upon the one thing of getting that child cured; all right here in the father's feeling towards his son; but something wrong, something defective in the feeling towards Christ which, for the man's own sake and for his son's sake, and for the sake of that gathered crowd, and for the sake of us, and of all who shall ever read this narrative, Jesus desired to seize upon this opportunity to correct. "If thou canst do any thing," the father says. "If thou canst believe," is our Lord's quick reply. 'It is not, as thou takest it, a question as to the extent of my power, but altogether of the strength of thy faith; for if thou canst but believe, all things are possible, this thing can easily be done.' Receiving the rebuke in the spirit in which it was given, awaking at once to see and believe that it was his want of faith that stood in the way of his son's cure, sensible that he had been wrong in challenging Christ's power, that Christ was right in challenging his faith, with a flood of tears that told how truly humble and broken his spirit was, the man cries out, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Who is not grateful to the man who lets us see into that tumult and agony of soul in which true faith is born—how it is that out of the dull and fearful spirit of mistrust the genuine, child-like confidence of the heart in Jesus struggles into being. "Lord, I believe." 'I have a trust in thee. I know that thou hast all power at thy command, and canst exercise it as thou wilt. But when I look at that which this power of thine is now called to do, my faith begins to falter. Lord, help mine unbelief. Thou only canst do it. Thou only canst strengthen this weak and failing heart of mine. It is thine to cure the bodily distemper of my son. It is thine to heal the spiritual infirmities of my soul.' What a mixture here of weakness and strength—the cry for help betraying the one, yet in that very cry the other standing revealed! Few utterances that have come from human lips have carried more in them of the spirit that we should all seek to cherish; nor would it be easy to calculate how many human beings have taken up the language this man taught them

to employ, and said to Jesus, "Lord, we believe; help thou our unbelief."

In answer to this confession and this prayer, something still further might have been said, had not our Lord perceived a fresh pressure in upon them of the neighboring crowd, at sight of which he delayed no longer, but turning to him who still lies on the ground before him, in words of sternness and decision he says, "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him!" A fresh cry of agony, a last and most violent convulsion, and the poor afflicted youth lies stretched out so motionless that many, looking at him, say that he is dead. But Jesus takes him by the hand and lifts him up, and delivers him perfectly cured to his glad and grateful father. The work was done; the crowd dispersed, "all amazed at the mighty power of God."

Afterwards, when alone with him in the house, the apostles asked Jesus why it was that they could not cast the devil out. He told them that it was because of their unbelief. They had suffered perhaps that late announcement which he had made to them of his impending sufferings and death to dim or disturb their faith, or they had allowed that still more recent selection of the three, and his withdrawal from them up into the mountain, to engender a jealousy which weakened that faith. One way or other, their faith had given way, and in its absence they had tried the power of their Master's name, in the hope that it might act as a charm or talisman. Jesus would have them know that it was not thus that his name was rightly, or could ever effectively, be employed. Yet at the same time he would have them know that the kind of spirit by which this youth had been possessed was one not easy of ejection—which required, in fact, on the part of the ejector, such a faith as could only be reached by much prayer and fasting; teaching them thus, in answer to their inquiry, the double lesson—that the primary source of their failure lay in the defect of their faith; and that the manner in which that faith could alone be nourished up to the required degree of strength was by fasting and by prayer; by weaning themselves from the pursuits and enjoyments of sense; by repeated and earnest supplications to the Giver of every good and perfect gift, whose office it is to work in his people the work of faith with power. At the same time Jesus took the opportunity which this private interview with his disciples afforded—as he had taken the opportunity of his interview with the importunate father—to proclaim the great power, the omnipotence of faith. Matt. 17:20. This obviously was the one great lesson which, in this passage of his earthly history, Jesus designed to teach.

Sudden and very striking must have been the transition from the brightness, the blessedness of that sublime communion with Moses and Elias on the mount, to the close contact with human misery in the shape of the possessed lunatic who lay writhing at his feet; so sharp and impressive the contrast that the prince of painters, in his attempt to picture to our eye the glories of the transfiguration, has thrown in the figure of the suffering child at the base of the mountain. But more even than by this contact with human misery does our Saviour seem on this occasion to have been impressed by his coming into such close contact with so many forms of human unbelief. And he appears to have framed and selected this as the first occasion on which to announce, not only the need and the benefit, but the illimitable power of faith.

He could easily have arranged it so that no application had been made to his disciples in his absence, but then they had wanted the lesson the failure carried in its bosom. He could easily have cured that maniac boy at once and by a word; but then his father had missed that lesson which, in the short preliminary conversation with him, was conveyed. And through both, to us and to all, the great truth is made known that in this world of sin and sorrow the prime necessity is, that we should have faith in God and faith in Jesus Christ—not in certain truths or propositions about God or about Jesus Christ—but simple, childlike trust in God as our Father, in Jesus as our Saviour; a faith that will lead us in all times of our weakness and exposure, and temptation and distress, to fly to them to succor us, casting ourselves upon a help that never was refused to those who felt their need of it. Neither for our natural nor for our spiritual life is the physical removal of mountains necessary; if it were, we believe that it would be given in answer to believing prayer; but mountains of difficulty there are, moral and spiritual, which do need to be removed ere our way be made plain, and we be carried smoothly and prosperously along it; corruptions within us to be subdued; temptations without us to be overcome. These must be met, and struggled with, and overcome. It is by the might and mastery of faith and prayer that this can alone be accomplished. And it is no small comfort for us to be assured, on the word of our Lord himself, that though our faith be small in bulk as the mustard-seed, yet if it be genuine—if it humbly yet firmly take hold of the mighty power of God and hang upon it, it will avail to bring that power down to our aid and rescue; so that, weak as we are in ourselves, and strong as the world is to overcome us, yet greater shall he be that is with us than he that is in the world, and we shall be able to

do all things through Him who strengtheneth us. Prayer, it has been said, moves the arm that moves the universe. But it is faith which gives to prayer the faculty of linking itself in this way with Omnipotence, and calling it to human aid. And so you find that, in one of the other two instances in which Jesus made use of the same expressions as to the power of faith which he employed upon this occasion, he coupled faith and prayer together. "Master," said Peter, wondering at the effect which a single word of Jesus had produced—"Master, behold, the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away! And Jesus answering said unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Wonderful words, assigning an all-embracing, an absolutely unlimited efficacy to faith and prayer—words not to be lightly judged of, as if they were intended to encourage the rash and ignorant conceits and confidences of a presumptuous enthusiasm, but words of truth and soberness, notwithstanding the width and compass of their embrace, if only we remember that true faith will confide in God or Christ only for that as to which he invites, and so warrants, its confidence; and true prayer will ask for that alone which is agreeable to the will of God, and will promote the spiritual and eternal good of him upon whom it is bestowed. These are the conditions—natural and reasonable—which underlie all that Christ has said of the power of faith and prayer. And within these conditions we accept all that he has said as true in itself, and wanting only a firmer faith, and a more undoubting prayer than we have exercised or put forth, to receive its fulfilment in our own experience.



## II.

## THE PAYMENT OF THE TRIBUTE-MONEY—THE STRIFE AS TO WHO SHOULD BE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.\*

FROM his retirement in the neighborhood of Cæsarea-Philippi, Jesus returned to Galilee—not, however, to resume his public ministry there. He sought privacy now, even among the scenes of his former labors—a privacy that he wished to consecrate to the further enlightenment of the twelve as to his own character and office, and the true nature of the kingdom he came to institute. Mark 9:30, 31. It was in fulfilment of this purpose that, on the way from the scene of the transfiguration to his old haunts about Capernaum, he made a second announcement of his impending death and resurrection, adding to the details of his passion formerly given that of his betrayal. So hid was the meaning of Christ's words, that all that the apostles appear to have derived from them was, a vague impression that some great and decisive events in their Master's history were drawing near, in contemplation of which they began disputing among themselves which should be greatest in the kingdom which they hoped to see so soon set up—keeping, as they imagined, their disputings about this topic concealed from Christ.

On their arrival at Capernaum, the persons appointed to receive the annual tribute which was paid for the support of the temple services came to Peter and said to him, "Doth not your Master pay tribute?" Those who put this question were not the publicans or ordinary tax-gatherers, who levied the dues laid upon the Jews by their governors the Romans. Nor was the question one about the payment of any common tax, any civil impost. The very form of the question, had it been literally rendered, would have indicated this—"Doth not your Master pay the didrachma?" a coin then modern and in circulation, equivalent to the old half-shekel, which, having gone out of use, had become rare. Every Jew of twenty years old and upward was required to give a half-shekel yearly for the maintenance, first of the tabernacle, and afterwards of the temple. Although this payment was legally imposed, it does not appear to have been enforced by civil pains or penalties. It was left rather, like other of the Mosaic imposts, to the spontaneous action of conscience and a good-will towards the theocracy on the part of the people. It was to the pay-

\* Matt. 17:22-27; 18:1-35; Mark 9:33-41; Luke 9:43-50.

ment of this didrachma or half-shekel for the upholding of the temple and its ordinances that the question put to St. Peter refers. It is impossible for us to say positively in what spirit or with what motives the question was put. It certainly was not the question of the lynx-eyed collectors of the ordinary revenue, detecting an attempted evasion of the payment of one or other of the common taxes. From no civil obligation laid upon him by law did Jesus ever claim to be exempt; nor would the argument which he used afterwards with the apostle, embodying a claim to exemption in this case, have been applicable to any such obligation. But why did those to whom the gatherers of this ecclesiastical impost was intrusted speak as they did to St. Peter? Was it from doubt or ignorance on their part as to whether Jesus ought to be asked or now meant to pay this tax? Priests, Levites, prophets, some tell us that even rabbis were held to be free from this payment. Had Christ's retirement now from public duty suggested the idea that he had thrown aside that character under which immunity might have been claimed by him, and that he might be called upon therefore to submit to all the ordinary obligations under which every common inhabitant of the country was laid? Or was this a piece of rude impertinence on the part of the under-officials of the hierarchy, who, seeing the disfavor into which Jesus had sunk with their superiors, were quick to take advantage of their commission to obtrude a question that seemed to cast some reproach on Christ as if he were a defaulter? Some color is given to the supposition that it was in a sinister spirit that the inquiry was made, from the circumstance of St. Peter's prompt reply—a reply in which there may have been indignation at an implied suspicion, and a scorn at disputing about such a trifle—so that without any communication with Jesus, he shuts the mouths of these gainsayers by saying, 'Yes, his Master paid, or would pay, the tribute.' Had the tone in which the question was asked and the apostle's reply was given been known to us, we might have told whether it was so or not. As it is, it can only be a conjecture that it was in a hostile and malicious spirit that the collectors of the tribute-money acted. Peter, however, was too rash and hasty. It might be true enough that his Master had no desire to avoid that or any other service which he owed to the temple and to its worship. It might be safe enough in him to undertake for his Master so trifling a payment, which, whether Jesus acquiesced in the engagement or not, the apostle could easily find the means for meeting. But in such an instant acknowledgment of the obligation, there was an overlooking on Peter's part of the dignity of Christ's person, and of his position towards the temple. To remind

him of this oversight, to recall his attention to what was implied in his own recent confession at Cæsarea-Philippi, when they were come into the house, without waiting for any communication from Peter as to what had occurred, Jesus said to him, "What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?"—those who are not members of their own family—not sons, but subjects. Peter saith to him, 'Of the latter; of strangers. Jesus saith to him, Then are the children free.' Upon this simple principle Christ would have Peter to recognize his immunity from that tribute which was now claimed—for was he not greater than the temple? Did he not bear to that temple the relation of the Son in the house of his Father? And did he not as such stand free from all the obligations which the King and Lord of that house had laid upon his servants—his subjects? It will not be easy to show any pertinence assumed in the plea for immunity thus presented, without admitting the altogether peculiar relationship in which Christ stood to the Father. Accept the truth of his divine Sonship to the Father, and the plea holds good; reject that truth, and the plea seems weak and void. And was it not for the purpose of still further illustrating that very Sonship to God which Peter for the moment had forgotten, that our Lord directed him to do that which in the issue carried with it so remarkable a proof that in the great temple of the visible creation Jesus was not a servant, but a Son; that everywhere within and over that house he ruled; that all things there were ready to serve him—the flowers of the field, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea—seeing that at Christ's bidding one of the latter was to be ready to grasp at Peter's hook, and on being taken up, was to have in its mouth the stater, the four-drachm piece, the very sum required from two persons for the yearly temple-tax? It is as viewed in this connection that a miracle which otherwise would look needless and undignified—out of keeping with the general character of our Lord's great works, all of which in some way have something more than mere exhibiting of power—takes rank with all the rest as illustrative of the higher character and office of the Redeemer. It was not want which forced our Lord upon this forthputting of his divinity. Even had the bag which Judas carried been for the moment empty, the sum required to meet this payment was not so large but that it could easily have been otherwise procured; but in the manner in which the need was met, Jesus would set forth that character on the ground of which he might have claimed immunity—throwing over the depths of his earthly poverty the glory of his divine riches, and making it manifest how easy it had been for

him to have laid all nature under contribution to supply all his wants. Yet another purpose was served by this incident in our Saviour's life. In point of time, it harmonizes with the first occasions on which Jesus began to speak of that church, that separate society which was to spring forth out of the bosom of Judaism, and to take the place of the old theocracy. Had he, without explanation made, at once ratified the engagement that Peter made for him, it might have been interpreted as an acknowledgment of his subjection to the customs and laws of the old covenant. That no offence might be taken—taken in ignorance by those who were ignorant of the ground upon which immunity from this payment on his part might have been asserted—he was willing to do as Peter said he would. In this it became him to fulfil all the righteousness of the law; but even in doing so, he will utter in private his protest, and in the mode wherein that protest is embodied convey beforehand no indistinct intimation that a breach was to take place between the temple-service and the new community of the free of which he was to be the Head.

It is extremely difficult to determine what the exact order of events was on the arrival at Capernaum. If it were while they were on the way to the house—most likely that of Peter, in which Jesus took up his abode—that the collectors of the temple tax made their application, then the first incident after the arrival would be the short conversation with Simon, and the despatching him to obtain the stater from the fish's mouth upon the lake. In Peter's absence, and after they had entered the house, Jesus may have said to his disciples, "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?" They were so struck by surprise, had been so certain that their Master had not overheard the dispute that had taken place, that they had no answer to give to his inquiry. Meanwhile, Peter has returned from his errand, and reported its result, while they in turn report to him the inquiry that had been made of them. Let us remember here that up to the time of the arrival in the neighborhood of Cæsarea-Philippi, no instance is on record of any controversy having arisen among the personal attendants on Christ as to the different positions they were to occupy in his kingdom. All had hitherto been so vague and indefinite as to the time and manner of the institution of the kingdom, that all conjecture or anticipation as to their relative places therein had been kept in abeyance. Now, however, they see a new tone and manner in their Master. He speaks of things—they do not well know what—which are about to occur in Jerusalem. He tells them that there were some of them standing there before him which should not taste of death till they had seen the kingdom of God.



Which of them could it be for whom such honor was in reserve? He takes Peter and James and John up with him to the mount, and appears there before them in so new an aspect, invested with such a strange and exceeding glory, that the privilege of being present at such a spectacle must have appeared to the three as a singular distinction conferred upon them. They were not to tell the others what they had seen, but they could scarcely fail to tell them they had seen something wonderful beyond any thing that had happened in their Lord's wonderful life, which they were not permitted to reveal. Would not the seal of secrecy so imposed enhance in their estimation the privilege which had been conferred on them, and would it not in the same degree be apt to awaken a jealousy on the part of the nine? At the very time, then, that they all began to look out for the coming of the kingdom as near at hand, by the materials thus supplied for pride with some, for envy with the rest, an apple of discord was thrown in among the twelve. They were but men of like passions with ourselves. They had as yet no other notion of the kingdom that was shortly to appear than that it would be a temporal one; that their Master was to become a powerful and victorious prince, with places, honors, wealth, at his command. And what more natural than that they whom he had chosen to be confidential attendants in the days of his humiliation should be then signally exalted and rewarded? Such being their common expectations, any mark of partiality on Christ's part would be particularly noted; and what more natural than that such a signal one as that bestowed upon the three, in their being chosen as the only witnesses of the transfiguration, should have stirred up the strife by the way as to who should be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

This first outbreak of selfishness and pride and ambition and envy and strife, among his chosen companions, was a great occasion in the sight of Jesus. It might and it did spring to a large extent from ignorance, and, with the removal of that ignorance, might be subdued; but it might and it did spring from sources which, after fullest knowledge had been conveyed of what the kingdom was and where-in its distinctions lay, might still have power to flood the church with a whole host of evils. Therefore it was that Jesus would signalize this occasion by words and an act of particular impressiveness. Peter had returned from the lakeside with the stater in his hand to pay for himself and for Jesus. The others told him of the questions that had been put to them, and of the silence they had observed. As they do so, this new instance of Peter's selection for a separate service stirs the embers of their former strife, and in their curiosity

and impatience one of them is bold enough to say to Jesus, "Who is or shall be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Jesus sits down, calls the twelve that they might be all around him, and says to them, "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last." "If any man, actuated by selfish, covetous, ambitious motives, seek to be first in my kingdom, he shall be last—the very efforts that he shall make to climb to the highest elevation there being of their very nature such as shall plunge him to the lowest depths. But if any man would be first within that kingdom, first in goodness, first in usefulness, first in honor there, let him be last, willing to be the servant of others, ready to esteem others better than himself, prepared to take any place, to make any sacrifice, to render any service, provided only that others' welfare be thereby advanced. In humbling himself so, that man shall be exalted. I give to this great truth a visible and memorable representation.' Jesus called a little child to him, and set him in the midst, then took him into his arms, and said, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." 'Ye are fighting about places, power, preëminence in my kingdom; but I tell you that the selfishness, the pride, the ambition, out of which all such strife emerges, are so wholly alien from the nature of that kingdom which I have come to introduce and establish, that unless you be changed in spirit, and become meek, humble, teachable, submissive as this little child which I now hold so gently in my arms, ye cannot enter into that kingdom, much less rise to places of distinction there. You wish to know who shall be greatest in that kingdom. It shall not be the wisest, the wealthiest, the most powerful, but whosoever shall most humble himself, and in humility be likeliest to this little child, the same shall be greatest in the kingdom of heaven.' 'If that be true,' we can fancy the apostles thinking and saying, 'if all personal distinction and preëminence must be renounced by us, if in seeking to be first we must be last, and each be the servant of all the others, what then will become of our official influence and authority—who will receive and obey us as thy representatives?' Our Lord's reply is this—'Your true and best reception as my ambassadors does not depend upon the external rank you hold, or the official authority with which you may be clothed. It depends upon your own personal qualities as humble, loving, devoted followers of me. This is true of you and of all; for whosoever receiveth one such little child—one of these little ones which believe in me, in my name—receiveth me; and whosoever receiveth me, receiveth not me but him that sent me.'

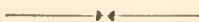
This new idea about receiving the least of Christ's little ones in

Christ's name, awakens in the breast of one of his auditors a troubling remembrance. John recollects that he and some others of the disciples had once seen a man casting out devils in the name of Christ, and that they had forbidden him to do so, because, as they thought, he had no authority to do so, had received no commission, was not even openly a follower of Jesus. Somewhat in doubt now, after what he has heard, as to whether they had been right in doing so, he states the case to Jesus, and gets at once the distinct and emphatic "Forbid him not, for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name that can lightly speak evil of me." John had judged this man rashly and severely, had counted him guilty of presumption in attempting, while standing outside the circle of Christ's acknowledged friends and followers, to do any thing in his name; had doubted or disbelieved that he was a disciple of or a believer in Jesus. Full of the spirit of officialism, in the pride of his order as one of the selected twelve, to whom alone, as he imagined the power of working miracles in Christ's name had been committed, John had interfered to arrest his procedure—acting thus as the young man and as Joshua did, of whom we read in the book of Numbers, "And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp. And Joshua the son of Nun, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them." But Moses, in the very spirit of Christ, said, "Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them." Numb. 11:27, 29. "Forbid him not," said Jesus. 'His doing a miracle in my name is a far better evidence of his cherishing a real trust in me, being one of mine, than any external position or official rank that he could occupy. Be not hasty in deciding as to who are and who are not my genuine disciples; for while that is true which I taught you when I was speaking of those who alleged that I cast out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils, that "he that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad," (Matt. 12:30,) it is no less true that "he that is not against us is on our part.'" Neither of the two sayings, indeed, can be universally and unlimitedly applied; but there are circumstances in which absence of open hostility may of itself be taken as evidence of friendship; and there are circumstances in which absence of open friendship may of itself be taken as evidence of hostility. Instead of overlooking as they had done, such a strong conclusive evidence as that of working miracles in Christ's name, John and the others should have been ready, as their Master was, to recognise the slightest token of attachment. "For whosoever," added Jesus, "shall give

you a cup of water to drink, in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, He shall not lose his reward."

"The beginning of strife," the wise man said, "is as when one letteth out water." And that beginning of strife among the apostles of Christ as to which of them should be greatest, what a first letting out was it of those bitter waters of contention, envy, and all uncharitableness, which the centuries since Christ's time have seen flooding the church—its members struggling for such honors and emoluments, or, when these were but scanty, for such authority and influence as ecclesiastical offices and positions could confer! Slow, indeed, has that society which bears his name been in learning the lesson which, first in precept, and then in his own exalted example, the Saviour left behind him, that "whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

We have had before us the first of the two instances in which John was led away by a fiery and intemperate zeal—in this instance to misjudge and condemn one who, though he had not faith nor fortitude enough to leave all and follow Jesus, yet had faith enough to enable him to work miracles in Christ's name. It is not told us how John took the check which Jesus laid upon that spirit of officialism and fanaticism which had been working in his breast. But we do know how thoroughly that spirit was at last subdued in the heart of the meekest and most loving of the twelve, and how he moved afterward among his fellow-men with step of Christ-like gentleness, and became the "guardian spirit of the little ones of the kingdom."



### III.

#### CHRIST AND HIS BRETHREN.\*

WE like to follow those who by their sayings and doings have filled and dazzled the public eye, into the seclusion of their homes. We like to see such men in their undress, when, all restraint removed, their peculiarities of character are free to exhibit themselves in the countless artless ways and manners of daily domestic life. It brings them so much nearer to us, gives us a closer hold of them, makes us feel more vividly their kinship to us, to know how they did the things that we have all every day to do, how they comported themselves in the circumstances in which we all every day are placed. Great pains have been taken by biographers of distinguished men to gratify this

\* John 7:1-9.



desire. Quite apart, indeed, from any object of this kind, we could scarcely sit down to write out an account of what we saw and heard in the course of two or three years' close intercourse with a friend, without dropping many a hint as to the minor modes and habits of his life.

Is there nothing remarkable in the entire absence of any thing of this kind in the narrative of the four evangelists? Engrossed with what they tell us, we think not of what they have left untold; think not, for example, that they have left no materials for gratifying the desire that we have spoken of—one so natural and so strong. It is as if, in writing these narratives, a strong bias of our nature had been put under restraint. They say not a word about the personal appearance of their Master; there is nothing for the painter or sculptor to seize on. They give us no details of his private and personal habits, of any peculiarities of look or speech or gesture, of the times or ways of his doing this thing or that. St. Mark, the most graphic describer of the four, tells us once or twice of a particular look or motion of our Lord, but not so as to indicate any thing distinctive in their manner. Why this silence? Why thus withhold from us all means of forming a vivid conception of the Redeemer's personal appearance, and of following him through the details of his more familiar daily intercourse with the twelve? Was it that the materials were wanting, that there were no personal peculiarities about Jesus Christ, that inwardly and outwardly all was so nicely balanced, all was in such perfect harmony and proportion, that as in his human intellect and human character there was nothing to distinguish him individually from his fellow-men—nothing, I mean, of that kind by which all the individual intellects and characters are each specially characterized—so even in the minor habits of his life there was nothing distinctive to be recorded? Or was it that the veil has been purposely drawn over all such materials, to check all that superstitious worship of the senses which might have gathered round minute pictures of our Lord in the acts and habits of his daily life? If even as it is, the passion for such worship has made the food for itself to feed upon, and, living upon that food, has swelled out into such large proportions, what would it have been if such food had from the first been provided? Is it not well that the image of our Lord in his earthly life, while having the print of our humanity so clearly and fully impressed upon it, should yet be lifted up and kept apart, and all done that could be done to keep it from being sullied by such rude, familiar, irreverent regard?

What is true of our Lord's habits generally, is true of his reli-

gious habits—of the time and manner in which religious duties were performed. We know something of the manner in which these duties were discharged by a truly devout Jew of Christ's age, of the daily washings before meals, and the frequent fastings, and the repeated and long prayers, of the attendance at the synagogue, and the regular going up to the great feasts at Jerusalem. Some of these Jesus appears to have neglected. The scribes and the Pharisees came to him, saying, "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread." Matt. 15:2. Again they came to him with another similar complaint, "Why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees, but thine eat and drink?" These charges are brought nominally against the disciples, who only followed the example of their Master. He neglected the ordinary ablutions to which in Jewish eyes a sacred character attached. He himself did not fast, and he taught his disciples that when they did so it was to be in such a manner that men might not know that they were fasting. Of the times and the manner in which our Lord's private devotions were conducted, how little is revealed! You read of his rising up a great while before day, and retiring into a solitary place to pray. Mark 1:35. You read of his sending the multitude away, and going up into a mountain to pray; of his continuing all night in prayer. Matt. 14:23; Luke 6:12. You read of special acts of devotion connected with his baptism, his transfiguration, his agony in the garden, his suffering on the cross. We know that it was by him, and him alone, of all the children of men, that the precept "pray without ceasing," was fully and perfectly kept—kept by its being in the spirit of prayer that his whole life was spent—but when we ask what Christ's daily habit was, how often each day did he engage in specific acts of devotion, and how, when he did so, were these acts performed, did he retire each morning and evening from his disciples to engage in prayer, did he daily, morning and evening, pray with and for his disciples, the evangelists leave us without an answer. The single thing they tell us, and it conveys but little precise information, is, that "it came to pass that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." Luke 11:1. This took place during the last six months of our Lord's ministry. It looks as if the disciples had come upon their Master when engaged in his solitary devotions, and had been so struck with what they saw and heard, that one of them, when the prayer was over, could not help asking him to teach them to pray. Remembering that this happened at so late a period

in their intercourse with him, does it not seem as if Jesus had not been in the habit of daily leading their devotions? The very difficulty that we feel in understanding how at such a time such a question came to be put to him, shows us what a blank there is here in the evangelic narrative, and how ignorant we must be content to remain.

If the generally accepted chronology of our Lord's life be the true one, and we see no reason to reject it, we are not left in such ignorance as to how another of the religious duties practised at the time by those around him was discharged by Christ. His ministry in Galilee lasted eighteen months. During this period, four of the great annual religious festivals at which the Jews were enjoined to attend had taken place at Jerusalem—two pentecosts, one passover, and one feast of tabernacles—at none of which Jesus appeared. There was indeed a reason for his absence, grounded on the state of feeling against him existing in Jerusalem, and the resolution already taken by the Jewish leaders there to cut him off by death. Till his work in Galilee was completed he would not place himself in the circumstances which would inevitably lead on to that doom being executed. But who of all around him knew of that or any other good or sufficient reason for his absenting himself from these sacred festivals? And to them what a perplexing fact must that absence have appeared! Altogether, when you take the entire attitude, bearing, and conduct of Jesus Christ as to their ablutions, their fastings, their prayers, their keeping of the Sabbath, their attendance at the feasts, it is not difficult to imagine what an inexplicable mystery he must have been to the great majority of his countrymen. I do not speak now of the scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, of whom his teaching and his life was one continued rebuke, and who hated him with a deadly hatred from the first, but of the many sincerely devout, superstitiously religious Jews among whom he lived. What a perfect puzzle to such the character and career of this man Christ Jesus—one speaking so much and in such a way of God and of godliness, proclaiming the advent of God's own kingdom on the earth, unfolding its duties, its privileges, its blessednesses, yet to them seeming so neglectful, so undevout, so irreligious! We may not be able now thoroughly to put ourselves in these men's position—thoroughly to understand with what kind of eyes it was that they looked upon that wonderful spectacle which the life of Jesus pressed upon their vision—but we should be capable of discerning the singular and emphatic protest which that life was ever raising against all mere formal piety, the piety of times and seasons and ordinances, the religion of rule and of routine.

But let us now rejoin our Lord. He is once more at Capernaum, or in its neighborhood. A year and a half has elapsed since he joined the bands in company with whom he had gone up to Jerusalem to keep the second passover after his baptism. It is autumn, and all around are busy in preparing for their journey to the capital to celebrate the feast of tabernacles. But he exhibits no intention to accompany them. He is going apparently to treat this festival as he had done the four which preceded it. What others thought of his behavior in this respect we are left to conjecture. His brethren, however—those who were either his actual brothers or his cousins, the members of that household in which he had been brought up—could not let the opportunity pass without telling him what they thought of his conduct. He and they had latterly been separated. They did not believe in him. They did not rank themselves among his disciples. Yet uninterested spectators of what had been going on in Galilee they could not remain. Now that Joseph was dead, he was the head of their family, and they could not but feel that their position and prospects were in some way linked with his. Somewhat proud they could not but be that he had excited such great attention, done such wonderful works, drawn after him such vast crowds. At first, with all their incredulity, they were half inclined to hope that some great future was in store for him. One who spake so highly and with such authority as he did, who claimed and exercised such power, what might he not be and do in a community so peculiarly placed, so singularly excitable as the Jewish one then was? He might even prove to be the Messiah, the great princely leader of the people, for whom so many were waiting. Against that was the whole style and character of his teaching—in which, instead of there being any thing addressed to the social or political condition of the people, any thing fitted to stir up the spirit of Jewish pride and independence, there was every thing calculated to soothe and subdue—to lead the thoughts and hopes of the people in quite other than earthly channels. Against it, too, there was the fact, becoming more apparent as the months ran on, that the natural leaders of the community, the scribes and Pharisees, by and through whom only it could be that any great civil emancipation could be effected, were uniting against him in a bond of firmer and fiercer hostility. Even the crowds of the common people, which had at first surrounded him, were latterly declining, offended at the way in which he was beginning to speak of himself—telling them that except they ate his flesh and drank his blood they had no life in them. Emboldened by all this to use the old familiarity to which in other days they had been accustomed, his



brethren come to him and say, "Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly: if thou do these things, show thyself to the world." Imputing to him the common motives by which all worldly, selfish, ambitious men are animated, they taunt him with weakness and folly. Who that possessed such powers as he did would be satisfied with turning them to such poor account? If he were what he seemed, was he to hide himself for ever among the hills of Galilee, and not go up boldly to the capital, and wrest from the rulers the acknowledgment of his claims? It was but a pitiful success to draw after him some thousands of a gaping multitude, who followed him because they ate of the bread that he furnished and were filled—all whose faith in him was exhausted in wondering at him as the worker of such miracles. Let him, if he had the spirit of a true courage in him—if he was fit to take the leadership of the people—let him aim at once at far higher game—place himself at once in the centre of influence at Jerusalem, and show himself to the world. Then if, on that broad theatre, he made his pretensions good, it would be some honor to claim connection with him; some benefit to be enrolled as his followers.

How true is all this to that spirit of a mere earthly prudence and policy by which the lives of multitudes are regulated! Christ's own brothers judge of him by themselves. They cannot conceive but that he must desire to make the most for his own benefit and aggrandizement of whatever gifts he possessed. They count it to be weak in him, or worse, that he will not do the most he can in this way and for this end. They measure all by outward and visible success. And if success of that kind be not realized, all the chances and opportunities that are open to him they regard as thrown away and lost. In speaking thus to Jesus, they sever themselves by a wide interval from their great relative. He was not of this world. Unselfish, unworldly were all his motives, aims, and ends. They are of the world, and true children of the world they are, in thus addressing him, proving themselves to be. And this they must be told at least, if they will not effectually be taught. It was in a tone of assumed superiority that they had spoken to him when they prescribed the course he should pursue. How far above them does he rise, as from that altitude whose very height hid it from their eyes, he calmly yet solemnly rolls back on them their rebuke: "My time is not yet come, but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you, but me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast. I go not up yet unto this feast, for my time is not yet full

come." They would have him seize upon the opportunity of the approaching feast to show himself to the world, to win the world's favor and applause. This was their notion of human life. The stage upon which men play their parts here was in their eyes but as a mixed array of changes and chances upon which the keen eye of selfishness should be always fixed, ready to grasp and make the most of them for purposes of personal aggrandizement. For such as they were, the time was always ready. They had no other reckoning to make, no other star to steer by, than simply to discern when and how their selfish interests could be best promoted, and what their hands thus found to do, to do it with all their might. The world could not hate them, for they were of the world, and the world loveth its own. Let them court its favor—let them seek its pleasures, its honors, its profits—and the world would be pleased with the homage that was offered it, and if they but succeeded, they might count upon its applause, for men would praise them when they did well for themselves. Psa. 49:18. It was not so with Jesus, but utterly and diametrically the reverse. His was no life either of random impulses, of fitful accident, or of regulated self-seeking. The world he lived in was to him no antechamber, with doors of aggrandizement here and there around, for whose opening he was greedily to watch, that he might go in speedily and seize the prizes that lay beyond before others grasped them. It was the place into which the Father had sent him to do there that Father's business, to finish the work there given him to do. And in the doing of that work there is to be no heat, no hurry, no impatience with him. The time, the hour for each act and deed, was already settled in the purposes and ordinances of the Father. And the Father's time, the Father's hour were his, for which he was always ready calmly and patiently to wait. The world's hatred he counted on—he was prepared for. He knew what awaited him at Jerusalem. He knew what the hatred cherished against him there would finally and ere long effect; but he must not prematurely expose himself to it, nor suffer it to hasten by a single day the great decess he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. His time was coming—the time of his manifestation to Israel—of his showing forth to the world—a very different kind of manifestation from that of which his brethren were dreaming. But it was not yet fully come, and therefore he did not mean to go up to Jerusalem and openly to take part from the beginning as one of its celebrators in this approaching Feast of Tabernacles. This, in ways which we can easily conjecture, but are not at liberty dogmatically to assert, would have interfered with the orderly evolution of the great event in which his earthly ministry was

to close. But the time was fixed—that feast was drawing on—when his hour would come, and then it would be seen how the Son would glorify the Father and the Father be glorified in the Son.

— And now let us remember that the sharp and vivid contrast drawn here by our Saviour's own truthful hand—between himself and his brethren according to the flesh—is the very same that he has taught us to draw between all his true disciples and the world. Let us listen to the description he gave of his own in that sublime intercessory prayer offered up on the eve of his agony, in that upper chamber in which the first communion was celebrated: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." The Father did not need to know for whom his Son was then interceding. The Father did not need to have any description of their character given to him. Yet twice in that prayer did Jesus say of his true followers thus: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." To know and feel and act as he did; under the deep abiding impression that, low as our lives are compared with his—small and insignificant as the ends are that any of us can accomplish—yet that our times, our ways, our doings are all ordered by heavenly wisdom for heavenly ends—that the tangled threads of our destiny are held by a Father's hand, to be woven into such patterns as to him seems best; by the cross of our Redeemer—by the redemption that was by it wrought out for us—by the great example of self-sacrifice that was in it exhibited—by the love of Him who died that we might live, to have the world crucified unto us, and ourselves crucified to the world; to have the same mind in us that was in Him who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; who, though he was so rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich. This would be to realize the description that our Lord has left behind him of what all his true disciples ought to be, and in some measure are. As we take up and apply the test it supplies, how deeply may we all humble ourselves before him—under the consciousness of how slightly, how partially, if at all, the description is true of us!

## IV.

## CHRIST AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.\*

GREAT national benefits, civil, social, and religious, were conferred upon the Jews by the ordinance that three times each year the whole adult population of the country should assemble at Jerusalem. The finest seasons of the year, spring and autumn, were fixed on for these gatherings of the people. The journeyings at such seasons of friends and neighbors, in bands of happy fellowship, must have been healthful and exhilarating. Separated as it was into clans or tribes, the frequent reunion of the entire community must have tended to counteract and subdue any jealousies or divisions that might otherwise have arisen. The meeting together as children of a common progenitor, living under the same laws, heirs of the same promises, worshippers of the same God, must not only have cultivated the spirit of brotherhood and nationality, but have strengthened their faith and guarded from the encroachments of idolatry the worship of the country. Among the lesser advantages that these periodical assemblages brought along with them, they afforded admirable opportunities for the expression and interchange of the sentiments of the people on every subject that particularly interested them—what in our times the press and public meetings do, they did for the Jews. So far as we know, no nation of antiquity had such full and frequent means of testing and indicating the state of public feeling. Whatever topic had been engrossing the thoughts of the community would be sure to be the subject of general conversation in the capital the next time that the tribes assembled in Jerusalem. Remembering how fickle public feeling is, how difficult it is to fix it and keep it concentrated upon one subject for any considerable period, we may be certain that it was a subject singularly interesting—one which had taken a general and very strong hold of the public mind, that for a year and a half, during five successive festivals, came up ever fresh upon the lips of the congregated thousands.

Yet it was so as to the appearance among them of Jesus Christ. Eighteen months had passed since he had been seen in Jerusalem, yet no sooner has the Feast of Tabernacles commenced than the Jews look everywhere around for him, and say, "Where is he?" The absence of one man among so many thousands might, we should think, have passed by unnoticed. The absence of this man is the

\* John 7:11-52.



subject of general remark. The people generally speak of him with bated breath, for it is well enough known that he is no favorite with the great men of the capital; and as they speak, great discord of opinion prevails. It gives us, however, a very good idea of the extent and strength of the impression he had made upon the entire population of the country, that at this great annual gathering, and after so long an absence, he is instantly the object of search, and so generally the subject of conversation. Even while they were thus speaking of him he was on his way to Jerusalem. Travelling alone, or but slenderly escorted, and choosing an unfrequented route, so that no pre-intimation of his approach might reach the city, he arrives about the middle of the feast, and throws off at once all attempt at concealment. Passing, as we might think, from the extreme of caution to the extreme of daring, he plants himself among the crowd in the temple courts, and addresses them as one only of the oldest and most learned of the rabbis might have ventured to do. Some of the rulers are there, but the suddenness of his appearance, the boldness of the step he takes, the manner of his speech, make them for the time forget their purpose. They can't but listen like the rest, but they won't give heed to the things about the divine kingdom that he is proclaiming. What strikes them most, and excites their wonder, is that he speaks so well, quotes the Scriptures, and shows himself so accurately acquainted with the law. "How knoweth this man letters," they say of him, "having never learned?" They would turn the thoughts of the people from what Jesus was saying to the consideration of his title and qualification to address them. 'Who is this? in what school was he trained? at the feet of which of our great rabbis did he sit? by what authority does he assume this office?' Questions very natural for men full of all the proud and exclusive spirit of officialism to put; questions by the very putting of which they would lower him in the estimation of the multitude, and try to strip his teaching of its power. They give to Jesus the opportunity of declaring, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." 'I am not addressing you either as a self-taught man, or one brought up in any of your schools. I am not addressing to you truths that I was taught by others, or have myself elaborated. Think not of me, who or what I am; think of what I teach, receive it as coming, not from me, but from him who sent me. You ask about my credentials; you would like to know what right I have to become a teacher of the people. There is a far simpler and better way of coming to a just conclusion about my teaching than the one that you are pointing to, and happily it is one that lies open unto all. If any man is truly willing to do the Divine will;

if he wants to know what that will is in order that he may do it; if that, in listening to my teaching, be his simple, earnest aim, he shall know of the doctrine that I am teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. - No amount of native talent, no extent of school learning of any kind, will compensate for the want of a pure and honest purpose. But if such a purpose be cherished, you shall see its end gained; if your eye be single, your whole body shall be full of light.' - And still the saying of our Lord holds good, that in the search of truth, in the preserving us from error, in the guiding of us to right judgments about himself and his doctrine, the heart has more to do with the matter than the head—the willingness to do telling upon the capacity to know and to believe. Jesus asks that he himself be judged by this principle and upon this rule. What, in teaching was his aim? - Was it to display his talent, to win a reputation, to have his ideas adopted as being his?—was it to please himself, to show forth his own glory? How boldly does he challenge these critical observers to detect in him any symptom of self-seeking! With what a serene consciousness of the entire absence in himself of that element from which no other human heart was ever wholly free, does he say of himself, "He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him."

So much is said by Jesus to encourage all truly desirous to know about him, so much to vindicate himself against the adverse judgment of the rulers; but how does all this apply to them? Have they the willingness to do? have they the purity and the unselfishness of purpose? This feast of tabernacles was the one peculiarly associated with the reading of the law. "And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law." Dent. 31:10-12. It is in presence of the very men whose duty it was to carry out this ordinance, that Jesus is now standing. From the first they hated him, and from the time, now eighteen months ago, that he had cured the paralytic, breaking, as they thought, the Sabbath, and said that God was his father, making himself equal with God, they had resolved to kill him. This was the way—by cherishing hatred and the secret intent to murder—that they were dealing with the law. Rolling their adverse judgment of him back upon themselves, and dragging out to light the purpose

that in the meantime they would have kept concealed, Jesus said, "Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?" Those to whom that question is more immediately addressed have no answer to give to it; but in the crowd are those who, ignorant of the plot against the life of Jesus, yet sharing in the rulers' contempt and hatred, say to him, "Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee?" Christ stops not to deal with such a speech, but takes up at once what had furnished so painful a weapon in the hands of the Pharisees against him. He refers to that one deed still fresh in the minds of all those in Jerusalem. The offence of that one act of his in curing the impotent man on a Sabbath-day, had been made to overshadow all his other acts, to overbear all his other claims to attention and regard. "I have done one work," he said, "and ye all marvel," as if I had thereby plainly proved myself a breaker of the Sabbath law. Formerly, before the Sanhedrim, he had defended himself against this charge of Sabbath breaking by other and higher arguments. Now, addressing, as he does, the common people, he takes an instance familiar to them all. The Sabbath law runs thus: "Thou shalt do no work on the seventh day." How was this law to be interpreted? If the circumcision of a man on the seventh day was not a breach of it, and no one thought it was, what was to be said of the healing of a man upon that day? If ye on the Sabbath circumcise a man, and the law of Moses is not broken, why "are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath-day?" The analogy was so perfect, and the question so plain, that no reply was attempted. In the temporary silence that ensues, some of the citizens of Jerusalem, who were aware of the secret resolution of the Sanhedrim, struck with wonder at what they now see and hear, cannot help saying, "Is not this he whom they seek to kill? But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?" We might imagine the words to have come from those who were ready themselves to see the very Christ in Jesus; but though they share not their rulers' persecuting spirit, these men have a prejudice of their own. It had come to be a very general opinion about this time in Judea, that the Messiah was to have no common human origin—no father or mother—he was to be raised from the dead beneath, or to come as an angel from the heavens. His not meeting this requirement is enough, with these men, to set aside the claims of Jesus of Nazareth. "Howbeit," they say, as men quite satisfied with the sureness of the ground on which they go, "Howbeit we know this

man whence he is : but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is. Then *cried* Jesus in the temple as he taught"—such an easy and self-satisfied way of disposing of the whole question of his Messiahship causing him to lift up his voice in loud and strenuous protest—"Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am : and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not. But I know him : for I am from him, and he hath sent me." The old and oft-repeated truth of his mission from the Father, coupled now with such a strong assertion of his own knowledge and of these men's ignorance of who his Father was, they are so irritated as to be disposed to proceed to violence ; but upon them, as upon the rulers, there is a restraint : "No man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come."

So impressed in his favor have many of the onlookers now become, that they are bold enough to say, "When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?" As Jesus had done no miracles at this time in Jerusalem, the speakers obviously refer to what he had elsewhere wrought. Their speech is immediately reported to the Pharisees and chief priests sitting in council in an adjacent court of the temple, who, so soon as they hear that the people are beginning to speak openly in his favor, send officers to take him. With obvious allusion to the errand on which these men come, as if to tell them how secure he felt, how sure he was that his comings and his goings in the future would be all of his own free will, Jesus says, "Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go to him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me : and where I am, thither ye cannot come ;" words very plain to us, but very dark to those who have no other interpretation to put upon them but that he may mean perhaps to leave Judea and go to the dispersed among the Gentiles. Little, however, as they were understood, there was such a tone of quiet yet sad assurance about them, that the high priests' officers pause, and return to give this to their employers as the reason why they had not executed the order given them, "Never man spake like this man."

So ended our Lord's first day of teaching in the temple, a day revealing on his part a wisdom, a courage, a serene, sublime, untroubled trust which took his adversaries by surprise, and held all their deadly purposes against him in suspense, and on the part of the multitude the strangest mixture of conflicting opinions and sentiments, with which our Lord so dealt as to win exemption from like interruptions afterwards, and to secure for himself an unbroken audience on the day when his last and greatest words were spoken.



The feast of tabernacles was instituted to commemorate the time when the Israelites had dwelt in tents during their sojourn in the desert. To bring the remembrance of those long years of tent-life more vividly before them, the people were enjoined, during the seven days that it lasted, to leave their accustomed homes, and to dwell in booths or huts made of gathered branches of the palm, the pine, the myrtle, or other trees of a like thick foliage. It must have been a strange spectacle when, on the day before the feast, the inhabitants of Jerusalem poured out from their dwellings, spread themselves over the neighborhood, stripped the groves of their leafiest branches, brought them back to rear them into booths upon the tops of their houses, along the leading streets, and in some of the outer courts of the temple. The dull, square, stony aspect of the city suffered a singular metamorphosis as these leafy structures met everywhere the eye. It was the great Jewish harvest-home; for this feast was celebrated in autumn, after all the fruits of the earth had been gathered in. It was within the temple that its joyous or thanksgiving character especially developed itself. Morning and evening, day by day, during sacrifices more crowded than those of any other of the great festivals, the air was rent with the praises of the rejoicing multitudes. At the time of the libation of water, the voice of their glad thanksgiving swelled up into its fullest and most jubilant expression. Each morning a vast procession formed itself around the little fountain of Siloam down in the valley of the Kedron. Out of its flowing waters the priests filled a large golden pitcher. Bearing it aloft, they climbed the steep ascent of Moriah, passed through the water-gate, up the broad stairs, and into the court of the temple, in whose centre the altar stood. Before this altar two silver basins were planted, with holes beneath to let the liquid poured into them flow down into the subterranean reservoir beneath the temple, to run out thence into the Kedron, and down into the Dead sea. One priest stood and poured the water he had brought up from Siloam into one of these basins. Another poured the contents of a like pitcher filled with wine into the other. As they did so, the vast assemblage broke out into the most exulting exclamations of joy. The trumpets of the temple sounded. In voice and upon instrument, the trained choristers put forth all their skill and power. Led by them, many thousand voices chanted the Great Hallel, (the Psalms from the 113th to the 118th,) pausing at the verses on which the chief emphasis was placed to wave triumphantly in the air the branches that they all bore, and make the welkin ring with their rejoicings. This was the happiest service in all the yearly ceremonial of Judaism. "He," said the old

Jewish proverb, "who has never seen the rejoicing at the pouring out of the waters of Siloam, has never seen rejoicing all his life." All this rejoicing was connected with that picturesque proceeding by which the Lord's providing water for his people in their desert wanderings was symbolized and commemorated. And few, if any, have doubted that it was with direct allusion to this daily pouring out of the waters of Siloam, which was so striking a feature of the festival, that on the last, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." "Your forefathers thirsted in the wilderness, and I smote the rock for them, so that the waters flowed forth. I made a way for them in the wilderness, and gave rivers in the desert to give drink to my people—my chosen. But of what was that thirst of theirs, and the manner in which I met it, an emblem? Did not Isaiah tell you, when in my name he spake, saying, "I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring. When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water?" And now I am here to fulfil in person all the promises that I made by the lips of my servant Isaiah, and I gather them up and condense them in the invitation, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."

"If any man thirst!" Ah! the Saviour knew it of these rejoicing Israelites, that glad and grateful as they were for the land that they had entered into out of the wilderness—no dry and thirsty land, but one of springs and of rivers, of the early and the latter rain—there was a thirst that none of its fountains could quench, a hunger that none of its fruitage could satisfy. And he knows it of us, and of all men, that a like deep inward thirst dries up our spirit, a like deep inward hunger is ever gnawing at our heart. Are there no desires, and longings, and aspirations in these souls of ours that nothing earthly can meet and satisfy? Not money, not honor, not power, not pleasure, not any thing nor every thing this world holds out—they do not, cannot fill our hearts—they do not, cannot quench that thirst that burns within. Can any one tell us where we may carry this great thirst and get it fully quenched? From the lips of the man Christ Jesus the answer comes. He speaks to the crowds in the temple at Jerusalem, but his words are not for them alone; they have been given to the broad heavens, to be borne wide over all the earth, and

down through all its generations: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Thirsty we know we are, and thirsty shall remain till we hear these gracious words, and hearing come, and coming drink, and drinking get the want supplied. Yes, we believe—Lord help our unbelief—that there is safety, peace, rest, refreshment, joy for these weary aching hearts in thee, the well-spring of our eternal life.

"He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Below the spot on which Jesus stood when speaking in the courts of the temple, there lay vast subterranean vaults, whose singular recesses have only recently been explored. Descending into them, you get a glimpse, by help of dimly burning tapers, of a vast cistern below the site of the ancient temple. Whether this large reservoir be filled wholly from without, or has a spring of living waters supplying it from below, remains to be ascertained. Enough, however, has been discovered to stamp with truth the ancient Jewish stories about the great cistern, "whose compass was as the sea," and about the unfailing waters of the temple. Nor can we any longer doubt that it was to these subterranean supplies of water that the prophet Joel alluded when he said, "It shall come to pass in that day that a fountain shall come forth out of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim;" that the prophet Zechariah alluded to when he said, "It shall be in that day that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem, half of them turned toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder;" that still more pointedly the prophet Ezekiel alluded to when he said, "Afterward he brought me again into the door of the house, and behold waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward, and the waters came down from under the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar." And as little can we doubt that Jesus had these very scriptures in his thoughts, and that cavity beneath his feet in his eye, when he said, "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." 'He that believeth shall not barely and alone have his own thirst assuaged, but I in him, by my Spirit given, moulding him into my own likeness, shall turn him into a separate well-head, from whose depths rivers of living water shall flow forth to visit, gladden, fructify some lesser or larger portion of the arid waste around.' Let us know and remember then, that Jesus, the Divine assuager of the thirst of human hearts, imparts the blessing to each who comes to him, that he may go and impart the blessing to others. He comforts us with a sense of his presence, guidance, protection, sympathy, that

we may go and console others with that same comfort wherewith we have been comforted of him. He never gives that we may selfishly hoard the treasure that we get. That treasure, like the bread that was broken for the thousands on the hillside of Galilee, multiplies in the hand that takes it to divide and to distribute.

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V.

JESUS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.\*

JESUS was in the treasury. It stood at the north side of one of those large enclosures called the Court of the Women, which lay outside the temple properly so called, and in which, on all the great annual festivals, crowds were wont daily to assemble. In the centre of this court, at the feast of tabernacles, two tall stands were placed, each supporting four large branching candelabra. As at the time of the morning sacrifice, the procession wound its way up from the fountain of Siloam, and the water was poured out from the golden pitcher to remind the people of the supply of water that had been made for their forefathers during the desert wanderings; so after the evening sacrifice all the lights in these candelabra were kindled, the flame broad and brilliant enough to illuminate the whole city, to remind the people of the pillar of light by which their marchings through the wilderness were guided. And still freer and heartier than the morning jubilations which attended on the libation of the water, were the evening ones, which accompanied the kindling of the lights. It was with allusion to the one ceremony that Jesus said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." It was with allusion to the other, of which both he and those around him were reminded by the stately chandeliers which stood at the time before their eyes, that he said, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." In uttering both these sayings, Jesus placed himself in a singular and elevated relationship to the whole human family. In the one he invited the entire multitude of human thirsters to come to him to have their thirst assuaged. In the other, he claimed to be the one central source of light and life to the whole world. Is it surprising that as they looked at him, and heard him speaking in this way, and thought of who and what, according to their reckoning he was, the Jews should have seen egotism and arrogance in his words? There



was in truth the very utmost pitch of such arrogance and egotism in them, had the speaker been such as they deemed him, a man like themselves. But one of his very objects in speaking so was to convince them and us that he was not such—that he stood toward the human family in quite other relationship from that in which any single member could stand to all the rest—that besides his connection with it, he had another and higher connection, that with his Father in heaven, which entitled him to speak and act in a way peculiar to himself. By word and deed, again and again repeated, Jesus had sought in vain to convey into the minds of these Jews an idea of how singular that connection was. He tries now once again, and once again he fails. Instead of their asking, ‘Who is this that offers to quench all human thirst, and who proclaims himself to be the light of the world?’ saying to themselves in reply, ‘He must be more than human, he must be divine; for who but One could claim such a prerogative and power?’ they listen only to find something to object to, and, grasping greedily at what lay on the very surface of the sayings, they say to him, “Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true.” Perhaps they had our Lord’s own words on the occasion of the former visit to Jerusalem on their memory: “If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.” He was speaking then of a solitary unsupported testimony—a testimony imagined to be borne by himself, to himself, and for himself, as one seeking to advance his own interests, promote his own glory. Such a testimony, had he borne it, he had then said would be altogether untrustworthy. His answer now to those who would taunt him at once with egotism and inconsistency is, “Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go.” ‘Had I not known that I came forth from the Father and am going back to the Father, that I am here only as his representative and revealer—did the consciousness of full, clear, constant union with him not fill my spirit—I would not, could not speak as I now do. But I know the Father, even as I am known by him; he works, and I work with him; whatsoever things he doeth I do likewise. It is out of the depth of the consciousness of my union with him that I speak, and what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man that is in him; and how else are you ever to know what can alone be known by my revealing it, if I do not speak of myself, or do not speak as he only can who stands in the relationship in which I do to the Father.

‘But “ye cannot tell whence I come and whither I go.” You never gave yourselves any trouble to find it out. You never opened mind or heart to the evidence that I laid before you. What early

alienated you from me was that I came not accredited as you would have desired, submitted no proofs of my heavenly calling to you for your approval, made no obeisance to you on entering on my career, came not up here to seek instruction at your hands, asked not from you any liberty to act as a scribe, a teacher of the law—instead of this, claimed at once this temple as my Father's house, condemned the way in which you were suffering its sacred precincts to be defiled, and have ever since, in all that I have said and done, been lifting up a constant, loud, and strenuous protest against you and your ways. You sit now in judgment upon me—you condemn me. You say that I am bearing record of myself, and that my record is not true; but “ye judge after the flesh.” You have allowed human prejudice, human passion, to fashion your judgment. I so judge no man. It was not to judge that I came into this world. I came not to condemn, but to save it. And yet if I judge, as in one sense I must, and am even now about to do, my judgment is true, for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me judge, as we do every thing, together. Your own very law declares, “that the testimony of two men is true.” I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.’

As if they wished this second witness to be produced, they say to him contemptuously, “Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father.” ‘You think that you know me, you pride yourselves in not being deceived in me as the poor ignorant multitude is—my earthly pedigree, as believed in by you, satisfies you as to my character and claims. You can scarcely, after all that I have said, have failed to perceive whom I meant when I was speaking of my Father. Him, too, you think you know; you pride yourselves on your superior acquaintance with him, you present yourselves to the people as the wisest and best expounders of his will and law. But “ye neither know me, nor my Father;” for to know the one is to know the other—to remain ignorant of the one is to remain ignorant of the other. It is your want of all true knowledge of me that keeps you from knowing God. It is the want of all true knowledge of God that keeps you from knowing me. Had you known me, you would have known him; had you known him, you would have known me.’

So fared it with our Lord's declaration that he was the light of the world, as it was at first spoken in the temple; so ended the first brief colloquy with the Jews to which its utterance gave birth. There was one, however, of its first hearers, upon whom it made a very different impression from that it made on the rulers of the Jews,

who treasured it up in his heart, who saw ever, as his Master's life evolved itself before him, more and more evidence of its truth, whose spirit was afterwards enlightened to take in a truer, larger idea of the place and function of his Lord in the spiritual kingdom than has ever, perhaps, been given to another of the children of men, who, on this account, was chosen of the Lord to set them forth in his gospel and in his epistles, and who has given to us this explanation of the words of his Master: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehendeth it not." John "came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life, for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." "This is the true God and eternal life." Such is the description John has left us of him who spiritually is the sun of this dark world, the central source of all its life and light. The life and light of the soul lie in the love of its Creator, in likeness to him, communion with him, in free glad service rendered, the joy of his approval felt. Freshly, fully was life and light enjoyed by man in the days of his innocence; the light of God's gracious presence shone upon his soul, and gladdened all his heart. Made in his Maker's image, he walked confidently, rejoicingly, in the light of his countenance, reflecting in his own peaceful, loving, holy, happy spirit as much as such mirror could of the glory of his Creator. He disobeyed and died; the light went out; at one stride came the dark. But the gloom of that darkness, the stillness of that death, were not suffered to prevail. From the beginning life and light have gone forth from Christ; all the spiritual animation that this world anywhere has witnessed, all the spiritual light by which its darkness has been alleviated, spring from him. The great Sun of Righteousness, indeed, seemed long in rising. It was a time of moon and stars and morning twilight till he came. But at last he arose, with heal-

ing in his beams. And now it is by coming unto him that death is turned into life, and darkness into light. He that hath him hath life, he that followeth him walketh not in darkness, but has the light of life.

The short colloquy between Christ and the Pharisees, consequent upon his announcement of himself as the light of the world, ended in their lips being for the moment closed. The silence that ensued was speedily broken by our Lord's repeating what he had said before about his going away—going where they could not follow. The speech had formerly excited only wonder, and they had said *among themselves*, "Will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles?" Now their passion against him has so risen that it excites contempt, and they say openly, not indeed to him, but of him, "Will he kill himself?" 'That would indeed be to go where we could not follow. Perhaps that may be what he means.' The drawing of such a distinction between themselves and him gives Jesus the opportunity of setting forth the real and radical difference that there was between them. The portraiture of their character and pedigree which, with truthful and unsparing hand, he proceeded to fill up, amid many rude breaks and scornful interruptions on their part, we shall not minutely scrutinize. One or two things only about the manner of our Lord's treatment of his adversaries in this word-battle with them, let us note.

He does not say explicitly that he is the Christ. His questioners were well aware what kind of person their Messiah was generally expected to be, how different from all that Jesus was. They would provoke him to make a claim which they knew would be generally disallowed. He will not do it. When they say, "Who art thou?" he contents himself by saying, 'I am essentially or radically that which I speak; my sayings reveal myself, and tell who and what I am.' In this, as in so many other instances of his dealing with those opposed to him at Jerusalem, his sayings were confined to assertions or revelations, not of his Messiahship, but of his unity of nature, will, and purpose with the Father. This was the great stumbling-block that the Jews found ever and anon flung down before them. That in all which Jesus was and said and did he was to be taken as revealing the character and expressing the will of God, was what they never could allow, and the more that the idea of a connection between him and God approaching to absolute identification was pressed upon them, the more they resented and rejected it. But why? Jesus himself told them. Their unbelief, he constantly asserted, sprung from a morally impure source; from an unwillingness to come into such living contact with the Father from their dislike to the purity, the benevo-



lence, the godliness that were in him as in the Father. When driven from the position they first assumed as children of Abraham, they claimed a still higher paternity, and said, "We have one Father, even God." Our Lord's reply was, "If God were your Father, ye would love me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word."

They wore a mask; behind that mask they hid a malicious disposition, and so long as deceitfulness and malignity ruled their spirit and regulated their lives, children of Abraham, children of God, they were not, could not be. They might boast what other parentage they pleased, but their works proclaimed that they were none other than the children of him who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." Very plain language, and very severe—not language for man to use to man—suitable alone for him who knew what was in man, who came as its light into the world, and discharged one of his offices as such in laying bare the hidden corruption with which he came into contact, for "all things that are reprov'd are manifest by the light, for whatsoever doth make manifest is light."

"But as he spake these words many believed on him," and for them, amid all his rebukes of his enemies, this was his word of encouragement, that if they continued in his word, if they but followed faithfully the light that shone in him, they should know the truth, know him who was the truth, and in him, and by that truth, they should be made free. These Jews imagined that simply as the children of Abraham they were free. So fondly did they cling to this idea, that often as the yoke of the stranger had been on them, they were ready proudly to say, "We were never in bondage to any man." Notwithstanding this, they were slaves—slaves to sin and Satan. In one sense they were in God's house, numbered outwardly as members of its household; but being actually such slaves, in that house they could not abide for ever. But if he who was not a servant in the house of another, but an heir in his own house—his Father's house—if he made his followers free, then were they free indeed. And into what a glorious liberty should they thus be introduced! freedom from the Law, its curse and condemnation; freedom from the yoke of Jewish and all other ceremonialism; freedom from the fear of guilt and the bondage of corruption; freedom to serve God willingly and lovingly—to be all, do all, suffer all which his will requires—this was the liberty wherewith Christ was ready to make free. This freedom was to be tasted but in imperfect measure by any here on earth, for

still onward to the end the old tyrant whose subjects they had been, would be making his presence and power felt; still onward to the end, while the mind was serving the law of God, a law would be in the members warring against the law of the mind. But the hour of a final and complete emancipation was to come at death. Death! it looked to nature like the stoppage of all life, the breaking of all ties, the quenching of all freedom and all joy. Not such was it to be to him who shared the life that Jesus breathes into the soul. To him it was to be rather light than darkness, rather life than death, the scattering of every cloud, the breaking of every fetter, the deliverance from every foe, the setting of the spirit absolutely and for ever free to soar with unchecked, unshadowed wing, up to the fountain-head of all life and blessedness, to bask in the sunshine for ever. "Verily, verily, if a man keep my sayings, he shall never see death."

But now let us look a moment at the special testimonies to his own person and character which, upon this occasion, and in the course of these rough conflicts with scornful and contemptuous opponents, Jesus bore. Light is its own revealer. The sun can be seen alone in the beams that he himself sends forth. So is it with him who is the light of the world. It is in the light of his own revelation of himself that we can see Jesus as he is. And what, as seen in the beams that he here sheds forth, does he appear? Two features of his character stand prominently displayed: his sinless holiness, his preëxistence and divine dignity. In proof of the stainless purity of his nature and his life, Jesus when here on earth made a threefold appeal. He appealed to earth, to hell, to heaven, and earth, hell, and heaven each gave its answer back. Two of these appeals you have in the passage that is now before us. Jesus appealed to earth when, looking round upon those men who with the keen eye of jealousy and hatred had been watching him from the beginning to see what flaws they could detect in him, he calmly and confidently said, 'Which of you convinceth me of sin, of any sin, the slightest transgression?' And earth gave her answer when these men stood speechless before him.

He appealed to hell—to that devil of whom he spoke so plainly as the father of all liars and all murderers, who would have accused and maligned him had he dared. "The prince of this world cometh and findeth nothing in me"—nothing of his own, nothing that he can claim, no falsehood, no malice, no selfishness, no unholiness in me. And hell gave its answer when the devil, whom Christ's word of power drove forth from his human habitation, was heard to say, "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God."

“Again, our Saviour carried the appeal to heaven, and, standing in the presence of the Great Searcher of all hearts, he said, in words that had been blasphemous from any merely human lips, “I do always those things that please him.” And thrice during his mortal career the heavens opened above his head, and the voice of the Father was heard proclaiming, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

What shall we think or say of him who claimed such perfect immunity from sin—the entire absence of any thing that could draw down upon it the Divine displeasure, the full presence of all that could draw down upon it the Divine approval? Was he, who knew others so well, ignorant of himself? or, conscious of transgression, did he yet deny it? Ignorant beyond other men, a hypocrite worse than those whom he charged with hypocrisy, must Jesus Christ have been, if, in speaking of his sinlessness as he did, his speech was not the free and natural expression of a self-consciousness of perfect purity, truth, and holiness of heart and life. In presence of one realizing such unstained perfection, who never once, in thought or word, or deed, swerved from the right, the true, the good, the holy, how humbled should we be under the consciousness of how different it is with us; and yet with that sense of humiliation should not the elevating, ennobling thought come in, that he in whom the sublime idea of a sinless perfection stands embodied, was no other than our Lord and Saviour, who came to show us to what a height this weak and sinful humanity of ours could be raised, who became partaker of our nature that we through him might become partakers of the Divine, and of whom we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad.” Christ’s day was no other than that of his manifestation in the flesh. Abraham rejoiced that he should see that day, and lived his earthly life cheered by the animating prospect. And he saw it, as Moses and Elijah did; for he was one of those who, in Christ’s sense of the words, had not tasted of death, of whom it was witnessed that he liveth, to whom in the realms of departed spirits the knowledge of the Redeemer’s advent had been conveyed.

Jesus had said that Abraham had seen his day. They twist his words as if he had said that he had seen Abraham. “Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?” The contemptuous query gives to our Lord the opportunity of lifting the veil that concealed his glory, and making the last, the greatest revelation of himself: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.”

Not simply, "Before Abraham was, I was," not simply a declaration of a being before Abraham, but a taking to himself the great, the incommunicable name, carrying with it the assertion of self-existence, of supreme divinity. So they understood it, who instantly took up stones to stone him as a blasphemer. And so let us understand it, not taking up stones to stone him, but lifting up hearts and hands together to crown him Lord of all.

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## VI.

### THE CURE OF THE MAN BORN BLIND.\*

WITHIN the court of the temple, in presence of the Pharisees and their satellites, Jesus had said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." The saying, resented as egotistical and arrogant, led on to that altercation which ended in their taking up stones to cast at him, and in his hiding himself in some mysterious way and passing out of the temple, "going through the midst of them." At one of the temple-gates, or by the roadside without, "as Jesus passed by he saw a man which was blind from his birth"—a well-known city beggar, whom Jesus and his disciples may have often passed in their way up to the temple. Now, at the very time when we might have imagined him more than ordinarily desirous to proceed in haste, in order to put himself beyond the reach of the exasperated men out of whose hands he had just escaped, Jesus stops to look compassionately upon this man. He sees in him a fit subject for a work being done, which, in the lower sphere of man's physical nature, shall illustrate the truth which he had in vain been proclaiming in the treasury, that he was the light of the world. As he stops, his disciples gather round him, and fix their eyes also upon the man whose case has arrested their Master's footsteps, and seems to have absorbed his thoughts. But their thoughts are not as his. They look, to think only of the rarity and severity of the affliction under which the man is laboring—to regard it as a judgment of God, whereby some great sin was punished—the man's own, it would be natural to suppose it should be; but then, the judgment had come before any sin had been committed by him—he had been blind from his birth. Could it be that the punishment had preceded the offence, or was this a case in which the sins of the parents had been visited on their child? "Master," they say to Jesus in their perplex-

\* John, chap. 9.



ity, "who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" The one thing that they had no doubt about—and in having no such doubt, were only sharing in the sentiment of all the most devout of their fellow-countrymen—was that some signal sin had been committed, upon which the signal mark of God's displeasure had been stamped. It was not as to the existence somewhere of some exceeding fault that they were in the least uncertain. Their only doubt was where to lay it. It was the false but deep conviction which lay beneath their question that Jesus desired to expose and correct when he so promptly and decisively replied, "Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents;" neither the one nor the other has sinned so peculiarly that the peculiar visitation of blindness from birth has been visited on the transgression. Not that Jesus meant to disconnect altogether man's suffering from man's sins. Had he meant to do so, he would not have said to the paralytic whom he cured at the pool of Bethesda, "Go thy way, sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee;" but that he wanted, by a vigorous stroke, to lay the axe at the root of a prevalent superstitious feeling which led to erroneous and presumptuous readings of God's providences, connecting particular sufferings with particular sins, and arguing from the relative severity of the one to the relative magnitude of the other.

Nor was this the only instance in which our Saviour dealt in the same manner with the same popular error. But a few weeks from the time in which he spake in this way to his disciples, Jesus was in Peræa. There had been a riot in Jerusalem—some petty premature outburst of that insurrectionary spirit which was rife throughout Judea. Pilate had let loose his soldiers on the mob. Some Galileans, who had taken part in the riot, or were supposed to have done so, for the Galileans were always in the front rank of any movement of the kind, were slain—slain even while engaged in the act of sacrificing, their blood mingled with their sacrifices: an incident so fitted to strike the public eye, to arouse the public indignation, that the news of it travelled rapidly through the country. It reached the place where Christ was teaching. Some of his hearers, struck, perhaps, by something that he had said about the signs of the times and the judgments that were impending, took occasion publicly to tell him of it. Perhaps they hoped that the recital would draw out from him some burning expressions of indignation, pointed against the foreign yoke under which the country was groaning; the deed done by the Roman governor had been so gross an outrage upon their national religion, upon the sacredness of the holy temple. If the tellers of the tale cherished any such expectation, they were disappointed. As

upon all like occasions, whenever any purely political question was brought before him, Christ evaded it. He never once touched or alluded to that aspect of the story. But there was another side of it, upon which he perceived that the thoughts of not a few of his hearers were fastened. It was a terrible fate that these slaughtered Galileans had met—not only death by the Roman sword, but death within the courts of the temple, death upon the very steps of the altar. There could be but one opinion as to the deed of their murderers, those rough Gentile soldiers of Pilate. But the murdered, upon whom such a dreadful doom had fallen, what was to be thought of them? Christ's all-seeing eye perceived that already in the breasts of many of those around him, the leaven of that censorious, uncharitable, superstitious spirit was working, which taught them to attach all extraordinary calamities to extraordinary crimes. "Suppose ye," said Jesus, "that these Galileans were sinners above all Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you nay." To give his question and his answer a still broader aspect—to take out of them all that was peculiarly Galilean—he quotes another striking and well-known occurrence that had recently happened near Jerusalem, a calamity not inflicted by the hand of man. "Or those eighteen," he adds, "upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you nay." He does not deny that either the slaughtered Galileans or the crushed Jerusalemites were sinners. He does not say that they did not deserve their doom. He does not repudiate or run counter to that strong instinct of the human conscience, which in all ages has taught it to trace suffering to sin. What he does repudiate and condemn is the application of that principle to specific instances, by those who know so little, as we do, of the Divine purposes and aims in the separate events of life—making the temporal infliction the measure of the guilt from which it is supposed to spring. It is not a wrong thing for the man himself, whom some sudden or peculiarly severe calamity overtakes, to search and try himself before his Maker, to see whether there has not been some secret sin as yet unrepented and unforsaken, which may have had a part in bringing the calamity upon him. It was not a wrong thing in Joseph's brethren, in the hour of their great distress in Egypt, to remember their former conduct, and to say, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, therefore is this distress come upon us." It was not a wrong thing for the king of Besek, when they cruelly mutilated him, cutting off his thumbs and great toes, to say, "Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table. As I have done, so

God hath requited me." But it was a wrong thing in the inhabitants of Melita, when they saw the viper fasten on Paul's hand, to think and say that "no doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live." It was a wrong thing in the widow of Zarephath, when her son fell sick, to say to Elijah, "What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? Art thou come to call my sins to remembrance, and to slay my son?" It was a wrong thing for the friends of Job to deal with their afflicted brother as if his abounding misfortunes were so many proofs of a like abounding iniquity. It is a very wrong thing in any of us to presume so to interpret any single dealing of God with others, particularly of a dark or adverse kind; for all such dispensations of his providence have a double character. They may be retributive; or they may be simply disciplinary, corrective, protective, purifying. They may come in anger, or they may be sent in love. And while as to ourselves it may be proper that we should view them as bearing messages of warning, we are not at liberty as to others to attribute to them any other character than that of being the chastenings of a wise and loving Father.

"Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be manifest in him." Those works—works of mercy and almighty power—were given to Christ to do, and here was an opportunity for one of them being done. To pause thus by the way, to occupy himself with the case of this poor blind beggar, might seem a waste of time, the more so that the purpose of his persecutors to seize and to stone him had been so recently and so openly displayed. But that very outbreak of their wrath foretold to Jesus his approaching death—the close of his allotted time of earthly labor—and so he says, "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." 'I said so to those proud and unbelieving men from whose rough violence I have just escaped. I will prove now the truth of what I said by bringing the light physically, mentally, spiritually, to this poor blind beggar.

All this time not a word is spoken by the blind man himself. Whatever cries for help he may have raised when he heard the footsteps of the approaching company, as they stop before him he becomes silent. He hears the question about his own sins and his parents' sins put by strange Galilean tongues to one addressed evidently with the greatest respect. He hears the one thus appealed to say, with an authority that he wonders at, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents"—grateful words to the poor man's ear. He

may have thought, in common with others, that he had been signally marked as an object of Divine displeasure. The words that he now hears may have helped to lift a load off his heart; already he may be more grateful to the speaker of these few words than if he had cast the largest money-gift into his bosom. But the speaker goes farther: he says that he had been born blind "that the works of God should be made manifest in him." If it were not the work of God's anger in the punishment of his own or his father's sins, what other work could it be? And who can this be who is now before him, who speaks of what he is, and what he does, and what he is about to do, with such solemnity and self-assurance? Who can tell us what new thoughts about himself and the calamity that had befallen him, what new thoughts about God and his purposes in thus dealing with him, what wonderings as to who this stranger can be that takes such an interest in him, what flutterings of hope may have passed through this poor man's spirit while the brief conversation between Christ and his disciples was going on, and during that short and silent interval which followed as Jesus "spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle"? This we know, that when Christ approached and laid his hand upon him, and anointed his eyes with that strange salve, and said to him, while yet his sightless balls were covered with what would have blinded for the time a man who saw, "Go wash in the pool of Siloam," he had become so impressed as quietly to submit to so singular an operation, and without a word of arguing or remonstrance to obey the order given, and to go off to the pool to wash. It lay not far off, at the base of the hill on which the temple stood, up and around which he had so often groped his way. He went and washed, and lo, a double miracle!—the one wrought within the eyeball, the other within the mind—each wonderful even among the wonders wrought by Christ. Within the same compass there is no piece of dead or living mechanism that we know of so curious, so complex, so full of nice adjustments, as the human eye. It was the great Creator's office to make that eye and plant it in its socket, gifting it with all its varied powers of motion, outward and inward, and guarding it against all the injuries to which so delicate an instrument is exposed. It was the Creator's will that some fatal defect, or some fatal confusion of its parts and membranes, should from the first have existed in the eyeball of this man. And who but the Creator could it be that rectified the defect or removed the confusion, bestowing at once upon the renovated organ the full power of vision? Such instant reconstruction of a defective, or mutilated, or disorganized eye, though not in itself a greater, appears to us a more surprising act of the Divine



power than the original creation of the organ. You watch with admiration the operation of the man who, with a large choice of means and materials, makes, and grinds, and polishes, and adjusts the set of lenses of which a telescope is composed. But let some accident happen whereby all these lenses are broken and crushed together in one mass of confusion, what would you think of the man who could out of such materials reconstruct the instrument? It was such a display of the Divine power that was made when the man born blind went and washed and saw.

But however perfect the eye be, it is simply a transmitter of light, the outward organ by which certain impressions are made upon the optic nerves, by them to be conveyed to the brain, giving birth there to the sensations of sight. But these sensations of themselves convey little or no knowledge of the outward world till the observer's mind has learned to interpret them as signs of the position, forms, sizes, and distances of the outlying objects of the visible creation. It is but slowly that an infant learns this language of the eye. It requires the putting forth of innumerable acts of memory, and the acquiring by much practice a facility of rapid interpretation. That the man born blind should be able at once to use his eyes as well as we all do, it was needed that this faculty should be bestowed on him at once, without any teaching or training; and when we fully understand (as it is somewhat difficult to do) what the powers were which were thus instantly conveyed, the mental will appear not less wonderful than the material part of the miracle of our Lord—that part of it too, of which it is utterly impossible to give any explanation but this, that there was in it a direct and immediate putting forth of the Divine power. The skilful hand of the coucher may open the eye that has been blind from birth, but no human skill or power could convey at once that faculty of using the eye as we now do, acquired by us in the forgotten days of our infancy. It may be left to the fanaticism of unbelief to imagine that it was the clay and the washing which restored his sight to the man born blind, but no ingenuity of conception can point us to the natural means by which the gift of perfect vision could have been at once conferred.

Yet of the fact we have the most convincing proof. It was so patent and public that there could be no mistake about it. It was subjected to the most searching investigation—to all the processes of a judicial inquiry. When one so well known as this blind beggar, whom so many had noticed on their way up to the temple, was seen walking among the other worshippers, seeing as well as any of them, the question was on all sides repeated, “Is not this he that sat and begged?”

Some said it was ; others, distrusting their own sight, could only say he was like him ; but he removed their doubts by saying, " I am he." Then came the question as to how his eyes were opened. He told them. Somehow or other, he had learned the name of his healer. " A man that is called Jesus made clay and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam and wash ; and I went and washed, and I received sight." But Jesus had not yet been seen by him ; he knew not where he was. It was so very singular a thing this that had been done—made more so by its having been done upon a Sabbath-day—that some of those to whom the tale was told would not be satisfied till the man went with them to the Pharisees, sitting in council in a side-chamber of the temple. They put the same question to him the others had done, as to how he had received his sight, and got the same reply. Even had Jesus cured him by a word, they would have regarded it as a breach of the Sabbath, but when they hear of his making clay and putting it on his eyes, and then sending him to lave it off in the waters of Siloam—all servile work forbidden, as they taught—they seize at once upon this circumstance, and say, " This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath-day." The question now was not about the cure, which seemed, in truth, admitted ; but about the character of the curer. Such instant and peremptory condemnation of him as a Sabbath-breaker roused a spirit of opposition even in their own court. Joseph was there, or Nicodemus, or some one of a like sentiment, who ventured, in opposition to the prevailing feeling, to put the question, " How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?" But they are overborne. The man himself, at least, who is there before them, will not dare to defend a deed which he sees the majority of them condemn. They turn to him, and say, " What sayest *thou* of him, that he hath opened thine eyes?" They are mistaken. Without delay or misgiving, he says at once, " He is a prophet." They order him to withdraw. They are somewhat perplexed. They wish to keep in hand the charge of Sabbath-breaking, but how can they do so without admitting the miracle? It would serve all their purposes could they make it out that there had been some deception or mistake as to the man's having been *born* blind—the peculiar feature of the miracle that had attracted to it such public notice. They summon his parents, who have honesty enough to acknowledge that the man is their son, and that he was born blind ; but as to how it is that he now sees, they are too timid to say a word. They know that it had been resolved that, if any man confessed that Jesus was the Christ, he was to be excommunicated—a sentence carrying the gravest consequences, inflicting the

severest social penalties. But they have great confidence in the sagacity of their son ; he is quick-witted enough, they think, to extricate himself from the dilemma. "He is of age," they say ; "ask him : he shall speak for himself." He is sent for ; appears again in their presence, ignorant of what has transpired—of what his parents, in their terror, may have said. And now, as if their former judgment against Jesus had been quite confirmed, and stood unquestionable, they say to him, "Give God the praise"—an ordinary Jewish form of adjuration. "My son," said Joshua to Achan, "give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession to him, and tell me now what thou hast done." And so now these Pharisees to this poor beggar : 'My son, give God the praise. We know, and do you confess, that this man is a sinner.' They are again at fault. In blunt, plain speech, that tells sufficiently that he will not believe that Jesus is a sinner simply because they say it, he says, "Whether he be a sinner, I know not ; one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." Balked in their first object to browbeat and overawe him, they will try again whether they can detect any inconsistency or contradiction in his testimony, and so they ask him to tell them over again how the thing had happened. Seeing through all the thin disguise they are assuming in seeming to be so anxious to get at the truth, he taunts them, saying, "I have told you already, and ye did not hear ; wherefore would ye hear it again ? will ye also be his disciples ?" No ambiguous confession of discipleship on his part. So at least they took it who replied, "Thou art his disciple : we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses ; as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is." Poor though he be, and altogether at the mercy of the men before whom he stands, the healed man cannot bear to hear his healer spoken of in such contemptuous terms. With a courage that ranks him as the first of the great company of confessors, and with a wisdom that raises him above all those high-born and well-taught Pharisees, he says, "Why, herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners ; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing." So terse, so pungent, so unanswerable the speech, that passion now takes the place of argument, and the old and vulgar weapon of authority is grasped and used. Meanly casting his calamity in his teeth, they say, "Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us ?" And they cast him out—excommunicated him on the spot.

Jesus hears of the wisdom and the fearlessness that he had displayed in the defence of the character and doings of his healer, and of the heavy doom that had in consequence been visited on him, and throws himself across his path. Meeting him by the way, he says to him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" Up to this moment he had never seen the man who had anointed his eyes with the clay and bidden him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. He might not by look alone have recognized him, but the voice he never could forget. As soon as that voice is heard, he knows who the speaker is. Much he might have liked to tell, and much to ask; but all other questions are lost in the one that, with such emphasis, the Saviour puts—"Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" He had heard of men of God, prophets of God, the Christ of God; but the Son of God—one claiming the same kind of paternity in God that every true son claims in his father—such a one he had never heard of. "Who is he, Lord?" he asks, "that I might believe on him. And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee." Never but once before that we remember—never but to the woman of Samaria—was so clear, so direct, so personal a revelation of himself made by Jesus Christ. In both—the woman by the wellside, the blind beggar by the wayside—Jesus found simplicity and candor, quickness of intelligence, openness to evidence, readiness to confess. Both followed the light already given. Both, before any special testimony to his own character was borne by Jesus himself, acknowledged him to be a prophet. Both thus stepped out far in advance of the great mass of those around them—in advance of many who were reckoned as disciples of the Lord. The man's, however, was the fuller and firmer faith. It had a deeper foundation to rest on. Jesus exhibited to the woman such a miracle of knowledge as drew from her the exclamation, "Sir, I perceive thou art a prophet." Upon the man he wrought such a miracle of power and love as begat within the deep conviction that he was a true worshipper of God, a faithful doer of the Divine will, a man of God, a prophet of God; and to this conviction he had adhered before the frowning rulers, and in face of all that they could do against him. He had risked all, and lost much, rather than deny such faith as he had in Jesus. And to him the fuller revelation was imparted. Jesus only told the woman of Samaria that it was the Messiah—the Christ of God—who stood before her. He told the man that it was the Son of God that stood before him. How far the discovery of his Sonship to God—his true and proper divinity—went beyond that of his Messiahship, we shall have occasion hereafter to unfold. But see how instantaneous the faith that follows the great



and unexpected disclosure. "Who is he, Lord," "the Son of God of whom you speak?" "I that speak unto thee am he. And he said, Lord, I believe, and he worshipped him;" worshipped him as few of his immediate followers yet had done; worshipped him as Thomas and the others did when they had the great miracle of the resurrection and the sight of the risen Saviour to establish and confirm their faith. What shall we say of this quick faith and its accompanying worship, evidences as they were of a fresh full tide of light poured into this man's mind? Shall we say that here another miracle was wrought—an inward and spiritual one, great and wonderful as that when, by the pool-side of Siloam, he washed those sightless eyeballs, and as he washed the clear, pure, bubbling water showed itself—the first bright object that met his opening vision—and he lifted up his eyes and looked around, and the hills of Zion and of Olivet, and the fair valley of the Kedron, burst upon his astonished gaze? That, perhaps, were wrong: for, great as the work of God's Holy Spirit is in enlightening and quickening the human soul, it is not a miraculous one, and should not be spoken of as such. But surely, of the two—the opening of the bodily and the opening of the spiritual vision—the latter was God's greater and higher gift.

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## VII.

### THE GOOD SHEPHERD.\*

THE blind beggar of Jerusalem was healed. How different the impression and effect of this healing upon the man himself, on the one side, and the Pharisees, his excommunicators, on the other! He, a poor, uneducated, yet simple-minded, simple-hearted man, grasping with so firm a hold, and turning to such good account the knowledge that he had, and eager to have more; reaping, as the fruit of Christ's act of mercy met in such a spirit, the unfolding by our Lord himself of his highest character and office: they, the guides and leaders of the people, so well taught and so wise, unable to discredit the miracle, yet seizing upon the circumstance that it was done upon the Sabbath, and turning this into a reproach, their prejudices fed and strengthened, their eyes growing more blinded, their hearts more hardened against Christ. This contrast appears to have struck the mind of our Lord himself. It was in the temple, the only place

where he could meet his fellow-men while under the ban of the Sanhedrim, that the healed man met Jesus. They may have been alone, or nearly so, when Christ put the question, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" and having got the answer which showed what readiness there was to receive further light, made the great disclosure of his Divinity. Soon, however, a number of the Pharisees approach, attracted by the interview. As he sees, compares, contrasts the two—the man and them—he says, "For judgment am I come into this world, that they which see not" (as this poor blind beggar) "may see, and that they which see" (as the Pharisees) "might be made blind." The Pharisees are not so blind as not to perceive the drift and bearing of the speech. They mockingly inquire, "Are we blind also?" "If ye were blind," is our Lord's reply, 'utterly blind, had no power or faculty of vision,' "ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see." 'You think you see; you pride yourselves on seeing so much better and so much farther than others. Unconscious of your existing blindness, you will not come to me to have your eyes opened: will not submit to the humbling operation at my hands: therefore your sin remaineth, abides, and accumulates upon you. Here was a poor stricken sheep, whom ye, claiming to be the shepherds of the flock, have cast out from your fold, whom I have sought and found. Let me tell you who and what a true shepherd of God's flock is. He is one that enters by the door into the sheepfold, to whom the porter opens readily the door, whose voice the sheep are quick to recognize, who calleth his own sheep by name, going before them and leading them out. He is a stranger, a thief, a robber, and no true shepherd of the sheep, who will not enter by the door, but climbeth up some other way.' Acute enough to perceive that this was said concerning human shepherds generally, leaders or pastors of the people—intended to distinguish the true among such from the false—and that some allusion to themselves was intended, Christ's hearers were yet at a loss to know what the door could be of which he was speaking, and who the thieves and robbers were. Dropping, therefore, all generality and all ambiguity, Jesus adds, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep." 'I have been, I am, I ever shall be, the one and only door of entrance and of exit, both for shepherds and for sheep. All that ever came before me, without acknowledging me, independently of me, setting me aside, yet pretending to be shepherds of the sheep—they are the thieves and the robbers. I am the door; by me, if any man enter in, whether he claims to be a shepherd, or numbers himself merely as one of the flock—those who are shepherds as to others

being still sheep as to me—if any man so enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.’

Thus much being said of the door, the one way of entrance into God’s true fold, the image of the door is dropped, and, without circumlocution or reserve, Christ announces himself as the Good Shepherd, and proceeds to describe his character and work as such. ‘I am the Good Shepherd; not simply a kind or loving shepherd, as opposed to such as are unkind or harsh in their treatment of the flock, but I am the one, the only one, in whom all the qualities needful to constitute the true and faithful shepherd meet and culminate in full and harmonious perfection. I am the Good Shepherd, who has already done, who waits still to do, that for the sheep which none other ever did or could do.’ On one or two of the qualities or characteristics which Christ here claims for himself, as wearing and executing the office, let us now fix our thoughts.

1. He sets before us the minute personal interest that he takes in each individual member of his flock. “He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.” The allusion here is to the fact that Eastern shepherds did give a separate name to each separate sheep, who came, in time, to know it, and, on hearing it, to follow at the shepherd’s call. It is thus that, when Isaiah would set forth the relation in which the Great Creator stands to the starry host, he represents him as leading them out at night as a shepherd leadeth out his sheep. “Lift up your eyes, and behold who hath created these things; that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names.” It is no mere general knowledge—general care—that the Great Creator possesseth and exercises. There is not a single star in all that starry host unnoticed, unguided, unnamed. The eye that seeth all, sees each as distinctly as if it alone were before it. The hand that guideth all, guides each as carefully as if it alone had to be directed by it. So is it with Jesus and the great multitude of his redeemed. Singling each out of that vast company, he says, “I have redeemed thee: I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine.” “I have graven thy name on the palms of my hands, to be ever there before mine eye. To him that overcometh will I give a white stone, and on the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he who receiveth it.” Individual names are given to mark off individual objects, to separate each, visibly and distinctly, from all others of the same kind. A new island is discovered, its discoverer gives to it its new name. A new instrument is invented, its inventor gives to it its new name. In that island, as distinguished from all other islands, its discoverer takes ever afterwards a special interest. In

that instrument, as different from all others, a like special interest is taken by its inventor. Another human spirit is redeemed to God : its Redeemer gives to it its new name, and for ever afterwards in that spirit he takes a living, personal, peculiar interest : bending over it continually with infinite tenderness, watching each doubt, each fear, each trial, each temptation, each fall, each rising again, each conflict, each victory, each defeat, every movement, minute or momentous, by which its progress is advanced or retarded, watching each and all with a solicitude as special and particular as if it were upon it that the exclusive regards of his loving heart were fixed.

It was no vague, indefinite, indiscriminate goodwill to all mankind that Jesus showed when here on earth. A large part of the narrative of his life and labors is occupied with the details of his intercourse with individuals, intended to set forth the special personal interest in each of them that he took. Philip brings Nathanael to him. Jesus says, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." "Go, call thy husband and come hither." "I have no husband," the woman of Samaria answers. Jesus says, "Thou hast well said thou hast no husband, for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband ; in that saidst thou truly." A lone, afflicted woman creeps furtively near to him, that she may touch but the hem of his garment ; she is healed, but must not go away imagining that she was unseen, unrecognized. Zaccheus climbs up into the sycamore, expecting simply to get a sight of him as he passes by. Christ comes up, stops before the tree, looks up, and says, "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house." "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Too numerous to go on quoting thus, were the manifestations of personal and particular regard shown by Jesus before his death. And when he rose from the sepulchre, he rose with the same heart in him for special affection. It was the risen Saviour who put the message into the angel's lips, "Go, tell the disciples and Peter that he is risen from the dead." And when he ascended up to heaven, he carried the same heart with him to the throne. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" There was not one of those, his little ones, whom Saul was persecuting, that he did not identify with himself. No vague, indefinite, indiscriminate superintendence is that which the great Good Shepherd still exercises over his flock, but a care that particularizes each separate member of it, and descends to the minutest incidents of their history.

We rightly say that one great object of the incarnation was so to



manifest the unseen Divinity, that our weak thoughts and our languid affections might the more easily comprehend and embrace him as embodied in the person of Jesus Christ the Son. But we fail to realize the full meaning, and to take home to ourselves the full comfort of the Incarnation, if we regard not our Divine Redeemer as seeing each of us wherever we are as distinctly as he saw Nathanael under the fig-tree, Zaccheus upon the sycamore-tree, as knowing all about our past history as minutely as he knew all about that of the woman by the well-side, sympathizing as truly and tenderly with all our spiritual trials and sorrows as he did with those of Peter and the churches whom Saul was persecuting.

2. Christ speaks of the mutual knowledge, love, and sympathy which unites the Shepherd and the sheep, creating a bond between them of the closest and most endearing kind. "I know my sheep, and am known of mine, as my Father knoweth me, and as I know the Father." The mutual knowledge of the Shepherd and the sheep is likened thus to the mutual knowledge of the Father and the Son. The ground of the comparison cannot be in the omniscience possessed equally by the Father and the Son, in virtue of which each fully knows the other, for no such faculty is possessed by the sheep; and yet their knowledge of the Shepherd is said to be the same in kind with his knowledge of them, and both to be the same in kind with the Father's knowledge of the Son and the Son's knowledge of the Father. What possibly can be meant by this but that there is a bond of acquaintanceship, affection, communion, fellowship, between each true believer and his Saviour, such in its origin, such in its strength, such in its sacredness, such in its present blessedness, such in its glorious issues in eternity, that no earthly bond whatever—no, not the closest that binds man to man, human heart to human heart—can offer the fit or adequate symbol of it, to get which we must climb to those mysterious heights, to that mysterious bond by which the Father and the Son are united in the intimacies of eternal love? This bond consists in oneness of life, unity of spirit, harmony of desire and affection. In the spiritual world, great as the distances may be which divide its members, (and vast indeed is that distance at which any of us stand from our Redeemer,) like discerneth like even afar off, like draws to like, like links itself to like, truth meets truth, and love meets love, and holiness clings to holiness. The new-born soul turns instinctively to him in whom it has found its better, its eternal life. Known first of him, it knows him in return; loved first by him, it loves him in return. He comes to take up his abode in it, and it hastens to take up its abode in him. He dwells in it; it

dwells in him. And broken and imperfect as, on the believer's part, this union and communion is, yet is there in it a nearness, a sacredness, a tenderness that belongs to no other tie by which the human spirit can be bound.

3. The manner in which the Good Shepherd leads his flock. "He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out; and when he putteth forth his sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him." The language is borrowed from pastoral life in Eastern lands; and it is remarkable that in almost every point in which a resemblance is traced between the office and work of the shepherd and that of Christ, the usages of Eastern differ from those of our Western lands. Our shepherds drive their flocks before them; and, in driving, bring a strong compulsion of some kind to bear upon the herd. This fashion of it puts all noticing, knowing, naming, calling of particular sheep out of the question; it is not an attraction from before, it is a propulsion from behind, that sets our flocks of sheep moving upon the way; it is not the hearing of its name, it is not the call of its master, it is not by the sight of him going on before that any single sheep is induced to move onward in the path. It is quite different in the East; the Eastern shepherd goes before his sheep, he draws them after him—draws them by those ties of dependence, and trust, and affection that long years of living together have established between them. He calls them by their name; they hear and follow. Hence the language of the Old Testament: "The Lord is my shepherd; he leadeth me beside the still waters." "Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and of Aaron." "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock"—a usage this of Eastern shepherd life truly and beautifully illustrative of the mode by which Jesus guides his people onward to the fold of their eternal rest; not by fear, not by force, not by compulsion of any kind—no, but by love, by the attraction of his loving presence, the force of his winning example. No guide or pastor he like those Pharisees whom Jesus had in his eye when, in contrast to them, he called himself the Good Shepherd—men binding heavy burdens, and laying them on other men's shoulders, while they would not touch them themselves with one of their fingers. In our blessed Lord and Master we have one who himself trod before us every step that he would have us tread, bore every burden he would have us bear, met every temptation he would have us meet, shared every grief he would have us share, did every duty he would have us do. Study it aright, and it will surprise you to discover over what a wide and varied field of human experience the example of our Saviour stretches, how difficult

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it is to find a position or experience of our common human life to which you may not find something answering in the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

4. The consummating act of his love for the sheep, and the perfect voluntariness with which that act is done. "I am the Good Shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." The hireling undertakes to guard the sheep as best he can. It is expected that he should be vigilant, alert, courageous in their defence, running at times, if need be, some risk even of limb or life. But no owner of a flock ever bound it upon the shepherd whom he hired, as a condition of his office, that if ever it came to be the alternative that the sheep must perish, or the shepherd perish, the latter must give up his life to save the flock. A human life is too precious a thing to be sacrificed in such a way. The owner of the flock would not give his own life for the sheep: he could not righteously ask his hireling to do it. The intrinsic difference in nature and in worth between the man and the sheep is such as to preclude the idea of a voluntary surrender of life by the one simply to preserve the other. How much in value above all the lives for which it was given was that of God's own eternal Son, we have no means of computing; but we can see how far above all sacrifice that either the owner of the flock acting himself as shepherd, or any under-shepherd whom he hired, ever made, or could be expected to make, was that which Jesus made when he laid down his life for the sheep. Yet how freely was this done! "I lay down my life that I might take it again: no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." Life is that mysterious thing, the giving and restoring of which the Creator keeps in his own hands. No skill or power of man ever made a new living thing. No skill or power of man ever rekindled the mystic light of life when once gone out. The power lies with man to lay down or take away his own life; but, once laid down, what man is he that can take it up again? Yet Jesus speaks as one who has the recovery of his own life as much at his command as the relinquishing of it—speaks of laying it down in order to take it again. He would have it be known, that whatever he might permit the men to do who had already resolved to take his life, his death would not be their doing, but his own; a death undergone spontaneously on his part, of his own free and unconstrained choice. Most willingly, through sheer love and pity, out of the infinite fulness of his divine compassion, was he to lay down his life for the sheep, that thus they might have life, and have it more abundantly than they otherwise could have—his death their life—his life from the dead drawing their

finite and forfeited life up along with it and linking their eternity with his own.

So we understand, and may attempt to illustrate this description by himself of himself as the Good Shepherd; but to the men who first listened to it, especially to those Pharisees whose conduct as shepherds it was meant to expose, how absolutely unintelligible in many of its parts must it have appeared! What an assumption in making himself the one and only door, in raising himself so high above all other shepherds, representing himself as possessed of attributes that none of them possessed, making sacrifices that none of them ever made! If a shepherd gave his life for the sheep, one would think that the sheep would lose instead of gain; would, in consequence of his removal, be all the more at the mercy of the destroyer. But here is a shepherd, whose death is held out as not only protecting the sheep from death, but imparting to them a new life; who dies, while yet by his dying, they lose nothing—do not even lose him as their shepherd—for he no sooner dies than he lives again to resume his shepherd's office. More than obscure—ambitious, and utterly self-contradictory must this account of himself have appeared to the listening Pharisees, their recoil not lessened by Christ's dropping incidentally the hint that there were other sheep, not of the Jewish fold, whom he meant to bring in, so that there should be one fold, over which he should be the one shepherd. "There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings." To many they appeared so presumptuous and inexplicable, that they said, "He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?" There were others who, unable to give any explanation of the sayings, yet clung to the evidence of his miracles, particularly of the one they had just witnessed. "These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?"

Leaving them to settle these differences among themselves, Jesus withdrew; and for two months—from the time of the Feast of Tabernacles to that of the Feast of the Dedication—the curtain drops over Jerusalem, and we see and hear no more of any thing said or done by Jesus there. Where and how were those two months spent? Many think that our Lord must have remained in or near the capital during this interval. It appears to us much more likely that he had returned to Galilee. We are expressly told that he would not walk in "Jewry because the Jews sought to kill him." After the formal attempt of the rulers to arrest him, and after the populace had taken up stones to stone him during the feast of tabernacles, it seems little likely that he would remain so long a time



within their reach and power. When next he appears in Solomon's porch, and the Jews gather round him, the tone of the conversation that ensues, in which there is so direct a reference to his declarations about himself, uttered at the close of the preceding festival, is best explained by our conceiving that this was a sudden reappearance of Jesus in the midst of them, when the thoughts both of himself and his hearers naturally reverted to the incidents of their last interview in the temple. "Then came the Jews round about him, and said, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." There was not a little petulance, and a large mixture of hypocrisy in the demand. These were not honest inquirers seeking only relief from perplexing doubts. Whatever Christ might say about himself, their minds about him were quite made up. They do not come to ask about that late discourse of his in which he had spoken so plainly about his being the one and only true shepherd of the sheep. They do not come to inquire further about that door, by which he had said that the true fold could alone be entered. They come with the one distinct and abrupt demand, that he should tell them plainly whether he was the Christ; apparently implying some readiness on their part to believe, but only such a readiness as the men around the cross expressed when they exclaimed, "Let him come down from the cross, and we will believe." They want him to assert that he was the Christ. They want to get the evidence from his own lips on which his condemnation by the Sanhedrim could be grounded; knowing besides that an express claim on his part to the Messiahship would alienate many even among those whose incredulity had been temporarily shaken.

There was singular wisdom in our Lord's reply: "I told you before, and ye believed not." In no instance had he ever openly declared to these Jews of Jerusalem that he was the Christ, nor was he now about to affirm it, in the way that they prescribed. Nevertheless it was quite true that he had often told them who and what he was; told enough to satisfy them that he must be either their long-expected Messiah or a deceiver of the people. And even if he had said nothing, his works had borne no ambiguous testimony to his character and office. But they had not received, they had rejected all that evidence. They wanted plain speaking, and now they get it, get more of it than they expected or desired, for Jesus not only broadly proclaims their unbelief, but reverting to that unwelcome discourse which was still ringing in their troubled ears, he tells them of the nature and the source of their unbelief: "Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto

you." Without dwelling, however, upon this painful topic, one about which these Jews then, and we readers of the Gospel now, might be disposed to put many questions, to which no satisfactory answers from any quarter might come to us, Jesus goes on to dwell upon what to him, as it should be to us, was a far more grateful topic, the characteristics and the privileges of his own true and faithful flock: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." That and more he had previously said while speaking of himself as the good shepherd, and noting some of the characteristics of his sheep. But now he will add something more as to the origin and nature, the steadfast and eternal endurance, of that new relationship, into which, by becoming his, all the true members of his spiritual flock are admitted.

"And I give unto them eternal life." Spiritual life, life in God, to God, is the new fresh gift of Christ's everlasting love. To procure and to impart it was the great object of his mission to our earth. "I am come," he said, "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." His incarnation was the manifestation of this life in all its fulness in his own person. "The life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you, that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." The life not flowing from the light, but the light from the life, even as our Lord himself hath said, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

There are gifts of Christ's purchase and bestowment that he makes over at once, and in a full completed form to the believer, such as pardon of sin, acceptance with God, the title to the heavenly inheritance. But the chief gift of his love—the life of faith, of love, of meek endurance, of self-sacrificing service and suffering—comes not to any of us now in such a form. It is but the germ of it that is planted in the heart. Its history here is but that of the seed as it lies in the damp, cold earth, as it rots and moulders beneath the sod, waiting the sunshine and the shower, a large part of it corrupting, decaying, that out of the very bosom of rottenness, out of the very heart of death, the new life may spring. Could but an intelligent consciousness descend with the seed into the earth, and attend the different processes that go on there, we should have an emblem of the too frequent consciousness that accompanies those first stages of the spiritual life, in which, amid doubts and fears, surrounded by the besetting elements of darkness, weak-

ness, corruption, death, the soul struggles onward into the life everlasting.

But weak as it is in itself, in its first beginnings, this spiritual life partakes of the immortality, the immutability, of the source from which it springs. It is this which bestows such preciousness on it. Put into a man's hand the seed of a flower-bearing or fruit-bearing plant, it is not the bare bulb he grasps he thanks you for. It would have but little worth in his eyes were it to remain for ever in the condition in which he gets it. It is the capacity for after growth, the sure promise of the living flower and fruit that lies enwrapped within, that gives it all its value. Slowly but surely does the mysterious principle of life that lodges in it operate, till the flower expands before the eye and the ripened fruit drops into the hand. So is it with the seed of the divine life lodged by the Spirit in the soul; with this difference, that for it there is to be no autumn season of decay and death. It is to grow, and grow for ever, ever expanding, ever strengthening, ever maturing; its perpetuity due to the infinite and unchangeable grace and power of Him on whom it wholly hangs. Strictly speaking, our natural life is as entirely dependent on God as our spiritual one. But there is this great distinction between the two: the one may run its course, too often does so, without any abiding sense on the part of him who is passing through it of his absolute and continued dependence on the great Lifegiver; the other cannot do so. Its essence lies in the ever consciousness of its origin, its continuance in the preservation of that consciousness. You may try to solve the phenomena of life in its lower types and forms, by imagining that a separate independent element or principle is bestowed at first by the Creator, which is left afterwards, apart from any connection with him, to develop its latent inherent qualities. You cannot solve thus the life that is hidden with Christ in God. Apart from him who gave it being, it has no vitality. It begins in a sense of entire indebtedness to him; it continues only so long as that sense of indebtedness is sustained. It is not within itself that the securities for its continuance are to be found.

"My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and none shall pluck them out of my Father's hands." Are we not entitled to gather from these words the comforting assurance that all who by the secret communications of his grace have had this life transfused into their souls, shall be securely and eternally upheld by the mighty power of Christ, so that they shall never perish? not so upheld, whatever they afterwards may be or do, not

so upheld that the thought of their security may slacken their own diligence or tempt them to transgress, but so that the very sense of their having such a presence and such a power as that of Jesus ever with them to protect and bless, shall operate as a new spring and impulse to all holy activities, and shall keep from ever becoming or ever doing that whereby his friendship would be finally and for ever forfeited and lost. Do we feel the first faint beatings of the new life in our hearts? Do we fear that these may be so checked and hardened as to be finally and for ever stopped? Let us not think of our weakness, but of Christ's strength; of our faith, but of his faithfulness; of the firmness of our hold of him, but of the firmness of his hold of us. The hollow of that hand of our Redeemer is the one safe place for us into which to put our sinful soul. Not into the hand of the Father, as the great and holy lawgiver, would the spirit in the first exercises of penitence and faith venture to thrust itself, lest out of that hand it should indignantly be flung, and scattered and lost should be the wealth of its immortality. It is into the hand of the Son, the Saviour, that it puts itself. Yet as soon as ever it does so, the other hand, that of the Father, closes over it, as if the redoubled might of Omnipotence waited and hastened to guard the treasure. "Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. . . . No man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." The believer's life is hid "with Christ." Far up beyond all reach of danger this of itself would place it. But farther still, it is hid "with Christ in God." Does this not, as it were, double the distance, and place the breath of two infinities between it and the possibility of perishing?

"I and my Father are one." It was on his saying so that they took up stones again to stone him. He might have claimed to be Christ, but there had been nothing blasphemous in his doing so. Many of the people—some even of the rulers—believed, or half suspected that he was the Messiah; yet it never was imagined that in setting forth such a claim Jesus was guilty of a crime for which he might righteously be stoned to death. The Jews were not expecting the divine being to appear as their Messiah. They were looking only for one in human nature, of ordinary human parentage, to come to be their king. It is not till he speaks of his hand being of equal power with the Father's to protect—till he grounds that equality of power upon unity of nature—till he says that he and the Father are one—that they take up stones to stone him. And their words explain their actions. While yet the stones are in their hands, Jesus says to them, "Many good works have I showed you



of my Father, for which of these works do ye stone me?" Ready for the moment to concede any thing as to the character of his works, they answer, "For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy, and because that thou being a man, makest thyself God." They understood him as asserting his divinity. Had they misunderstood his words, how easy it had been for Christ to correct their error—to tell them that he was no blasphemer as they thought him; that in calling himself the Son of God he did not mean to claim equality with the Father. He did not do so. He quotes, indeed, in the first instance, a sentence from their own Scriptures, in which their judges were called gods; but he proceeds immediately thereafter to separate himself from, and to exalt himself above those to whom because of their office, and because of the word of God coming to them, the epithet was once or twice applied, and reasons from the less to the greater. He says, "If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" At first there was some ambiguity in the defence. Although intimating that the appellation might be applied with more propriety to him than to any of their old judges, it might be on the ground only of a higher office or higher mission than theirs that Jesus was reasoning. They listen without interrupting him. But when he adds—"If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, yet believe the works: that ye may know, and believe that the Father is in me and I in him," they see that he is taking up the same ground as at the first—is claiming to be equal with the Father—is making himself God; and so once again they seek to take him, to deal with him as a blasphemer; but he escaped out of their hands. That neither upon this nor upon any other occasion of the same kind did our Lord complain of being condemned mistakenly when regarded as being guilty of blasphemy, nor offer the explanation which at once would have set aside the charge, we regard as the clearest of all proofs that the Jews were not in error in interpreting his sayings as they did.

— We take then, our Lord's wonderful sayings at the feast of dedication as asserting the essential unity of nature and attributes between himself and the Father, and as thus assuring us of the perfect and everlasting security and well-being of all who put their souls for keeping into his hand.

## VIII.

## INCIDENTS IN OUR LORD'S LAST JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM.\*

WE are inclined to believe that it was during the two months' interval between the feast of tabernacles and the feast of dedication that Christ's last visit to Galilee was paid—his farewell taken of the home of his youth—the scenes of his chief labors. Those labors had lasted for about two years, and in them an almost ceaseless activity had been displayed. He had made many circuits through all the towns and villages of the district, performed innumerable miracles, and delivered innumerable addresses to larger or smaller audiences. Yet the visible results had not been great. He had attached twelve men to him as his constant and devoted attendants. There were four or five hundred more ready to acknowledge themselves as his disciples. A vast excitement and a large measure of public sympathy had at first been awakened. Multitudes were ready to hail him as the great expected deliverer. But as the months rolled on, and there was nothing in his character or teaching or doings, answering to their ideas of what this deliverer was to be and do, they got incredulous—their incredulity fanned into strength by a growing party headed by the chief Pharisees, who openly rejected and reviled him. There had not been much in his earlier instructions to which exception could be taken, but when he began at a later period to speak of himself as the bread of life, and to declare that unless men ate his flesh and drank his blood they had no life in them, his favor with the populace declined, and they were even ready to believe all that his enemies insinuated, as to his being a profane man—an enemy to Moses and to their old laws. Not a few were still ready to regard him as a prophet, perhaps the forerunner of the Messiah; but outside the small circle of his immediate attendants there were few if any who recognised him as the Christ of God. Of this decline in favor with the multitude his adversaries greedily availed themselves, and Galilee was fast becoming as dangerous a home for him as Judea. Meanwhile his own disciples had been slowly awakening from their first low and earthly notions of him—their eyes slowly opened to the recognition of the great mystery of his character, as being no other than the incarnate Son of God. Till they were lifted up above their old Jewish notions of the Messiah—till they came to perceive how singular was the

\* Luke 9 : 51-62 ; 10 : 1-24.

relationship in which Jesus stood to the Father, how purely spiritual were the ends which he came to accomplish—he did not, could not, intelligibly speak to them of his approaching death, resurrection, and ascension. The confession of Peter in the name of all the rest that he was the Christ, the Son of God, marked at once the arrival of the period at which Jesus began so to speak, and the close of his labors in Galilee. On both sides, on the part alike of friends and enemies, things were ripening for the great termination, the time had come “that he should be received up,” and “he steadfastly set his face to go up to Jerusalem.”

Starting from Capernaum and travelling southward by the route on the west side of the Jordan, he sends messengers before his face, who enter a village of the Samaritans. We remember how gladly he had been welcomed two years before in one town of that district, how ready the inhabitants of Sychar had been to hail him as the Messiah, and we may wonder that now the people of a Samaritan village should so resist his entrance and reject his claims. It may have been that they were men of a different spirit from that of the Sycharites. But it may also have arisen from this—that the Samaritans at first had hoped that if he were indeed the Messiah, he would decide in favor of their temple and its worship, but that now, when they see him going up publicly to the feasts at Jerusalem, and sanctioning by his presence the ordinances of the sanctuary there, their feelings had changed from those of friendliness into those of hostility. However it was, the men of this village—the first Samaritan one that lay in the Lord’s path—“would not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.” Some marked expressions of their unfriendliness had been given, some open indignities flung upon his messengers, of which James and John were witnesses. These two disciples had been lately with their Master on the Mount of Transfiguration, and had seen there the homage that the great prophet Elijah had rendered to him. They were now in the very region of Elijah’s life and labors. They had crossed the head of the great plain, at one end of which stood Jezreel, and at the other the heights of Carmel. The events of the last few weeks had been filling their minds with vague yet unbounded hopes. Their Master had thrown off much of his reserve, had shown them his glory on the mount, had spoken to them as he had never done before, had told them of the strange things that were to happen at Jerusalem, had made them feel by the very manner of his entrance upon this last journey from Galilee, that the crisis of his history was drawing on. He courts secrecy no longer.

He sends messengers before his face. He is about to make a public triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Yet here are Samaritans who openly despise him—will not give him even a night's lodging in their village. The fervid attachment to Jesus that beats in the hearts of James and John kindles into indignation at this treatment. Their indignation turns into vengeful feeling towards the men who were guilty of such conduct. They look around. The heights of Carmel remind them what Elias had done to the false prophets, and fancying that they were fired with the same spirit, and had a still weightier wrong to avenge, they turn to Jesus, saying, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elias did?" They expect Jesus to enter fully and approvingly into the sentiment by which they are animated; they know it springs from love to him; they are so confident that theirs is a pure and holy zeal, that they never doubt that the fire from heaven waits to be its minister; they want only to get permission to use the bolts of heavenly vengeance that they believe are at their command. How surprised they must have been when Jesus turned and rebuked them, saying, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

Jesus is not now here for any personal insult to be offered—any personal injury to be inflicted; but still he stands represented, as he himself has taught us, in the persons of all his little ones, in the body of his church, the company of the faithful. Among these little ones within that company, how many have there been, how many are there still who cherish the spirit of James and John? who as much need our Lord's rebuke, and who would be as much surprised at that rebuke being given? There is no one thicker cloak beneath which human passions hide themselves, than that of religious zeal—zeal for Christ's truth, Christ's cause, Christ's kingdom. Once let a man believe, (a belief for which he may have much good reason, for it is not spurious but real zeal that we are now speaking of,) once let a man believe that a true and ardent attachment to Christ, a true and ardent zeal to promote the honor of his name, the interests of his kingdom, glows within him, and it is perfectly astonishing to what extent the consciousness of this may delude him—shut his eye from seeing, his heart from feeling—that, under the specious guise of such love and zeal, he is harboring and indulging some of the meanest and darkest passions of our nature—wounded pride, irritation at opposition, combativeness, the sheer love of fighting, of having an adversary of some kind to grapple with and overcome



personal hatred, the deep thirst to be avenged. These and such like passions, did they not in the days gone by rankle in the breasts of persecutors and controversialists? of men who claimed to be animated in all they said and did by a supreme regard to the honor of their Heavenly Master? These and such like passions, do they not rankle still in the hearts of many, now that the hand of the persecutor has to so great an extent been tied up, and the pen of the controversialist restrained—prompting still the uncharitable judgment, the spiteful remark, the harsh and cruel treatment? Christ's holy character and noble cause may have insults offered, deep injuries done to them; but let us be assured that it is not by getting angry at those who are guilty of such conduct, not by maligning their character, not by the visitation of pains and penalties of any kind upon them, that these insults and injuries are to be avenged; no, but by forbearance and gentleness, and love and pity—by feeling and acting towards all such men as our blessed Lord and Master felt and acted towards the inhabitants of that Samaritan village.

Perhaps it was the gentle but firm manner in which Jesus rebuked the proposal of the two disciples—telling them how ignorant they were of the true state of their own hearts—that led the Evangelist to introduce here the narrative of those cases in which our Lord dealt with other moods and tempers of the human spirit which produce often the same self-ignorance, and too often seriously interfere with a faithful following of Christ. One man comes—a type of the hasty, the impetuous, the inconsiderate—and, volunteering discipleship, he proclaims, “Lord, I will follow whithersoever thou goest.” Boastful, self-ignorant, self-confident, he has not stopped to think what following of Jesus means, or whither it will carry him—unprepared for the difficulties and trials of that discipleship which he is in such haste to take on. The quieting reply, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head,” sends him back to reflect somewhat more intelligently and deeply on what his offer and promise imply. Another is asked by Christ himself to follow him; but he says, “Suffer me first to go and bury my father:” a type of the depressed, the melancholic—of those whom the very griefs and sorrows of this life and the sad duties to which these call them stand as a barrier between them and the services, the sacrifices, the comforts and consolations of the faith. Such need to be taught that there is a duty above that of self-indulgence in any human grief; and so to this man the Lord's peremptory reply is, “Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.” A

third man asks, that before obeying the Saviour's call, he might be allowed first to go and bid his friends and relatives farewell: a very natural request—one in which we should imagine there was little that was wrong; but the searcher of all hearts sees that there is a hankering here after the old familiar way of living—a reluctance of some kind in some degree to take the new yoke on; and so the warning is conveyed to him in the words, "No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God." So varied was the spirit in which men approached Jesus, in whom some readiness to follow him appeared, so varied was the manner in which our Lord dealt with such, suiting himself to each particular case with a nicety of adjustment of which in our ignorance we are but imperfect judges, but enabling us to gather from the whole that it is a deliberate, a cheerful, an entire and unconditional surrender of the heart and life that Jesus asks from all who would be truly and for ever his.

Rejected by the Samaritans, Jesus turned to another village and chose another route to Jerusalem, in all likelihood the well-known and most frequented one leading through Peræa, on the east side of the Jordan. In prosecuting this journey, he "appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place whither he himself would come." Our Lord had gathered around him in passing from Capernaum to Samaria almost the entire body of his Galilean discipleship. It could scarcely furnish more men than were sent forth on this important mission. Every available disciple of suitable age and character was enlisted in the service. It can scarcely be imagined that they were employed for no other purpose than to provide suitable accommodation beforehand for their Master. Theirs was a higher and far more important errand. For the wisest reasons Jesus had hitherto avoided any public proclamation of his Messiahship. He had left it to his words and deeds to tell the people who and what he was. He had not long before this time, charged his apostles "that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ." Matt. 16:20. But the time had come for his throwing aside this reserve—for seeking rather than shunning publicity—for letting all men know, not only that the kingdom had come, but that he, the head of that kingdom, the Christ, the Son of David, the king of Israel, was in the midst of them. Before his departure from among them, the Israelitish nation was to have this proclaimed through all its borders. This was to be the peculiar distinction of his last journeyings towards the Holy City—that all along upon their course his Messianic character should be

publicly proclaimed, that so a last opportunity for receiving or rejecting him might be afforded. And how could this have been better effected than by the mission of the seventy? By the advance of so many men two by two before him, the greatest publicity must have been given to all his movements. In every place and city the voice of his forerunners would summon forth the people to be waiting his approach. The deputies themselves could scarcely fail to feel how urgent and important the duty was which was committed to their hands. Summoning them around him before he sent them forth, Jesus addressed to them instructions almost identical with those addressed to the twelve at the time of their inauguration as his apostles. The address to the twelve, as reported by St. Matthew, (chap. 10,) was longer, bore more of the character of an induction to a permanent office, carried in it allusions to duties to be done, persecutions to be endured, promises to be fulfilled, in times that were to follow the removal of the Lord; but so far as that first short mission of the twelve and this mission of the seventy were concerned, the instructions were almost literally the same. Both were to go forth in the same character, vested with the same powers to discharge the same office in the same way; to the rejecters and despisers of both the same guilt was attached, and upon them the same woes were denounced. We notice, indeed, these slight differences: that the prohibition laid upon the twelve not to go into the way of the Gentiles, nor into any city of the Samaritans, is now withdrawn, and that the gift of miraculous power is seemingly more limited as committed to the seventy, being restricted nominally to the healing of the sick. But these scarcely affect the question when comparison is made between the commissions given to the twelve and to the seventy, as employed respectively on the two temporary missions on which Jesus sent them forth. The result of that comparison is, that no real distinction of any importance can be drawn between the two. Does this not serve, when duly weighed, to stamp with far greater significance than is ordinarily attached to it the mission of the seventy—raising it to the same platform with that of the apostles? It is quite true that the apostles were to be apostles for life, and the seventy were to have no permanent standing or office of any kind in the church. But it was equally true that in their distinctively apostolic character and office the twelve were to have—indeed, could have no successors. If, then, the commissions and the directions given to them are to be taken as guides to those who were afterwards to hold office in the church, the commission and directions given to the seventy may equally be regarded as given for the guidance of the membership of

the church at large; this, the great, the abiding lesson that their employment by Jesus carries with it—that it is not to ministers or ordained officers of the church alone that the duty pertains of spreading abroad among those around them the knowledge of Christ. To the whole church of the living God, to each individual member thereof, the great commission comes, “Go thou and make the Saviour known.” As the Father sent him, Jesus sends all who own and love him on the same errand of mercy. Originally the church of Christ was one large company of missionaries of the cross, each member feeling that to him a portion—differing it may be largely both in kind and sphere from that assigned to others, but still a portion—of the great task of evangelizing the world was committed; and it will be just in proportion as the community of the faithful, through all its parts, in all its members, comes to recognise this to be its function, and attempts to execute it, that the expansive power that once belonged to it will return to it again; and not so much by organized societies or the work of paid deputies, as by the living power of individual pity, sympathy, and love, spirit after spirit will be drawn into the fold of our Redeemer, and his kingdom be enlarged upon the earth.

Where the seventy went, into what places and cities they entered, how they were received, what spiritual good was effected by them, all this is hidden from our view. The sole brief record of the result of their labors is what is told us about their return. They came back rejoicing. One thing especially had struck them, and of this only they make mention—that, though they had not been told of it beforehand, the very devils had been subject unto them through their Master’s name. They were pleased, perhaps somewhat proud, that what nine of the Lord’s own apostles had failed in doing they had done. Jesus tells them that his eye had been on them in their progress—that he had seen what they could not see—how the powers of the invisible world had been moved, and Satan had fallen as lightning from heaven. He tells them that it was no temporary power this with which they had been invested—that instead of being diminished it would afterwards be enlarged till it covered and brought beneath its sway all the power of the enemy. But there was a warning he had to give them. He saw that their minds and hearts were too much occupied by the mere exercise of power—by the most striking and tangible results of the exercise of that power. Knowing how faithless an index what is done by any agent is of what that agent himself is, of his real worth and value in the sight of God, he checks so far their joy by saying, “Notwithstanding, in



this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." There is a book of remembrance in the heavens, the Lamb's book of life, in which the names of all his true and faithful followers are written. It may be a great thing to have one's name inscribed in large, enduring letters in the roll of those who have done great things for Christ and for Christ's cause upon this earth; but that earthly register does not correspond with the one that is kept above. There are names to be found in the one that will not be met with in the other. There are names which shine bright in the one that appear but faintly luminous in the other. There are names that have never been entered in the one that beam forth with a heavenly brilliance in the other. The time comes when over the one the waters of oblivion shall pass, and its records be all wiped away. The time shall never come when the names that shall at last be found written in the other shall be blotted out.

The joy of the disciples had an impure earthly element in it which needed correction. No such element was in the joy which the intelligence that the seventy brought with them kindled in the Saviour's breast. He was the man of sorrows; a load of inward unearthly grief lay heavy on his heart. But out of that very grief—the grief that he endured for the sinful world he came to save—there broke a joy—the purest, the sublimest, the most blissful—that felt by him when he saw that the great ends of his mission were being accomplished, and that the things belonging to their eternal peace were being revealed to the souls of men. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Once before Jesus had offered up the same thanksgiving, in the same words, to the Father. We sought then to enter a little into its meaning.\* Now from the very repetition of it let us learn how fixed the order is, and how grateful we should be that it is so—that it is to the simple, the humble, the teachable, the childlike in heart and spirit, that the blessed revelation cometh.

Blessed we have called it, taking the epithet from Christ's own lips; for after he had offered up that thanksgiving to his Father, he turned to his disciples and said to them privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that you see: for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see,

\* See "Ministry in Galilee," p. 235 seq.

and have not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

One closing remark upon the position in the spiritual kingdom here tacitly assumed or openly claimed by Christ. He prefaced his instructions to the seventy by saying, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." Who was the Lord of the harvest, to whom these prayers of his disciples were to be addressed? Does he not tell them when he himself immediately thereafter proceeds to send forth some laborers, instructing them how the work in the great harvest field was to be carried on? Parting from Galilee he casts a lingering glance behind upon its towns and villages—Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. Who shall explain to us wherein the exceeding privileges of these cities consisted, and wherein their exceeding guilt? Who shall vindicate the sentence that Jesus passed, the woes that he denounced upon them, if he was not the Son of God, into whose hands the judgment of the earth hath been committed? "I beheld," said Jesus, "Satan as lightning fall from heaven." Was the vision a true one? If so, what kind of eye was it that saw it? "All things are delivered to me of my Father; and no man knoweth who the Son is but the Father, and who the Father is but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." With what approach to truth or to propriety could language like this be used by any human, any created being? So is it continually here and there along the track of his earthly sojourn, the hidden glory bursts through the veil that covers it, and in the full majesty of the all-knowing, all-seeing, all-judging, all-directing One—Jesus of Nazareth presents himself to the eye of faith.

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IX.

— OUR LORD'S MINISTRY IN PERÆA.\*

THE feast of tabernacles, at which St. John tells us that Jesus was present, was held in the end of October. The succeeding pass-over, at which our Lord was crucified, occurred in the beginning of April. Between the two there intervened five months. Had we depended alone upon the information given us by the first two Evangelists, we should have known nothing of what happened in this

\* Luke 9:51 to Luke 18:16.

interval beyond the fact that, when his ministry in Galilee was over, Christ went up to Jerusalem to die there. They tell us of two or three incidents which occurred at the close of this last journey, but leave us altogether in the dark as to any preceding visit to Jerusalem or journeyings and labors in any other districts of the land. True to his particular object of giving us the details of Christ's ministry in Judea, St. John enables us so far to fill up this blank as to insert: 1. The appearance at the feast of tabernacles; 2. The appearance at the feast of dedication, held in the latter end of December; 3. A retirement immediately after the feast to Peræa, the region beyond the Jordan; 4. A summons back to Bethany upon the occasion of the death of Lazarus; 5. A retreat to "a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim;" and 6. A coming up to Bethany and Jerusalem six days before the Passover. These cover, however, but a small portion of the five months. At the first of the two feasts Jesus was not more than four or five, at the second, not more than eight days in Jerusalem. His stay at Bethany, when he came to raise Lazarus from the dead, was cut short by the conspiracy to put him to death. Not more than a fortnight out of the five months is thus accounted for as having been passed in Jerusalem and its neighborhood. Where then was spent the remaining portion of the time? The gospel of St. Luke and it alone enables us to answer these questions. There is a large section of this gospel—from the close of the 9th to near the middle of the 18th chapter—which is occupied with this period, and which stands by itself, having nothing parallel to it in any other of the Evangelists. This section commences with the words, "And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him." Luke 9:51, 52. St. Matthew describes what is obviously the same event—our Lord's farewell to Galilee—in these words: "And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan." Matt. 19:1. And similarly St. Mark, of the same movement, says, "And he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judea by the farther side of Jordan." Mark 10:1. In the same chapters, and but a few verses after those in which these announcements are made, both St. Matthew and St. Mark relate the incident of little children having been brought to Jesus. But in the gospel of St. Luke, the record of this incident, instead of following so closely upon the notice of the departure from Galilee, does not come in till the close

of the entire section already alluded to—so many as eight chapters intervening. From that point the three narratives become again coincident, and run on together. We have thus so much as a third part of the entire narrative of St. Luke, and that continuous—to which, so far as the sequence of the story goes, there is nothing that corresponds in any of the other gospels.

In this part of St. Luke's gospel there are so few notices of time and place, that had we it alone before us, our natural conclusion would be that it described continuously the different stages of one long journey from Galilee up through Peræa to Jerusalem. Taking it, however, in connection with the information supplied to us by St. John, we become convinced that it includes all the journeyings to and fro which took place between the time when Jesus finally left Galilee to the time when he was approaching Jericho, on going up to his last passover. But how are we to distribute the narrative so as to make its different parts fit in with the different visits to Jerusalem and its neighborhood related by St. John? Our first idea here would be to start with identifying the final departure from Galilee, described by St. Luke, with the going up to the feast of tabernacles, as related by St. John. Looking, however, somewhat more closely at the two narratives, we are persuaded that they do not refer to the same journey. In the one, public messengers were sent before Christ's face to proclaim and prepare for his approach; in the other, he went up, "not openly, but, as it were, in secret." The one was slow, prolonged by a large circuit through many towns and villages; the other was rapid—Jesus waited behind till all his brethren and friends had departed, and then suddenly appeared at Jerusalem in the midst of the feast. Did Jesus then return to Galilee immediately after the feast of the tabernacles, and was it in the course of the two months that elapsed between the two festivals that the first part of the journey described by St. Luke was undertaken; or was it not till after the feast of dedication that the last visit to Galilee and the final departure from it took place? The absolute silence of St. John as to any such return to Galilee, and the unbroken continuity of his account of what happened at the two feasts, seem to militate against the former of these suppositions. We remember, however, that such silence is not peculiar to this case—that there is a similar instance of a visit paid to Galilee between the time of the occurrences, reported respectively in the fifth and sixth chapters of St. John's gospel, of which not the slightest trace is to be discovered there. We remember that if Jesus did remain in Judea between the feasts, it must have been in concealment, for we are told of this very period, that he would not walk in



Jewry because the Jews sought to kill him. John 7:1. We remember that St. John speaks of his going to Perea after the feast of dedication, as if it were one following upon another that had recently preceded it, "He went away again beyond Jordan." John 10:40. We reflect besides that if it were not till the beginning of January that the journey from Galilee commenced, there would be but little room for all the occurrences detailed in these eight chapters of St. Luke's gospel; and we accept it as being much the more likely thing that Jesus did retire from Judea to Galilee instantly after the close of the feast of tabernacles, and it was then that the series of incidents commenced, the sole record of which is preserved to us by the third evangelist. This, of course, implies that we break down the portion of his narrative devoted to the journeys to Jerusalem into portions corresponding with the interval between the two festivals, and those between the latter of these and the visit to Bethany. This might plausibly enough be done by fixing upon what appears to be something like one break in the narrative, occurring at chap. 13:22, and something like another at chap. 17:11. Without resting much upon this, let us (distribute its parts as we may) take the whole account contained in these eight chapters of St. Luke, as descriptive of a period of our Lord's life and ministry which otherwise would have been an utter blank, as telling us what happened away both from Galilee and Judea during the five months that immediately preceded the crucifixion.

Evidently the chief scene or theatre of our Lord's labors throughout the period was in the region east of the Jordan. Departing from Capernaum—turned aside by the inhabitants of the Samaritan village—he passed along the borders of Galilee and Samaria, crossed the Jordan at the ford of Bethshean, entering the southern part of the populous Decapolis, passing by Jabesh-Gilead, penetrating inward perhaps as far as Jerash, whose wonderful ruins attest its wealth and splendor; then turning southward towards Jerusalem, crossing the Jabbok, pausing at Mahanaim, where Jacob had his long night-struggle; climbing or skirting those heights and forests of Gilead to which, when driven from Jerusalem by an ungrateful son, David retreated, and which now was furnishing a like refuge to the Son and Lord of David in a similar but still sadder extremity. Much of this country must have been new to Jesus. He may once or twice have taken the ordinary route along the eastern bank of the Jordan, but it is not at all likely that he had ever before gone so deep into or passed so leisurely through this district. Certainly he had never visited it in the same style or manner. He came among this new

population with all the prestige of his great Galilean name. He came sending messengers before his face—in all likelihood the seventy expending their brief but ardent activities upon this virgin soil. He came as he had come at first to the Galileans, at the opening of his ministry, among whom many of the notices of what occurred here strikingly remind us, for we are distinctly told when he came into the “coasts beyond Jordan he went through the cities and villages,” and “great multitudes followed him, and he healed them,” and “the people resorted to him, and gathered thick together; and as he was wont, he taught them.” “And when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples.” Luke 13:22; Matt. 19:2; Mark 10:1; Luke 11:29, 42; 12:1. Here we have all the excitements, and the gatherings, and the manifold healings which attended the earlier part of the ministry in Galilee. The two communities were similarly situated, each remote from metropolitan influence, more open to new ideas and influences than the residents in Jerusalem. The instrumentality brought to bear upon them in the presence of Jesus and his disciples, in the proclamation of the advent of the kingdom, in the working of all manner of cures upon the diseased among them was the same. Are we surprised at it, that so many of the very scenes enacted at first in Galilee should be enacted over again in Peræa, and that, exactly similar occasions having arisen, the same discourses should be repeated? that once more we should hear the same accusation brought against Jesus when he cast out devils that he did so by Beelzebub, and that against this accusation we should hear from his lips the same defence? (Matt. 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:14;) that once more, as frequently before, there should be a seeking of some sign from heaven, and a telling again the evil generation that so sought after it that no sign but that of Jonas the prophet should be given? that once more, when asked by the disciples to teach them to pray, the Lord should have repeated the prayer he had recited in the Sermon on the Mount? that upon another and equally suitable occasion, about half of that sermon should now be re-delivered? that we should have in this period two cases of healing on the Sabbath, exciting the same hostility, that hostility in turn rebuked by the employment of the same arguments and illustrations? These and other resemblances are not surprising, and yet it is the very discernment of them which has perplexed many so much, that (in direct opposition to the expressed purpose of the gospel as announced in its opening sentence) they have been tempted to think that, in violation of all chronological order, St. Luke has

imported into what seems to be an account of what occurred after the departure from Galilee many of the incidents and discourses of the preceding ministry in Galilee. Instead, however, of our being perplexed at finding these resemblances or coincidences, knowing as we do otherwise, that it was the practice of our Saviour to reiterate (it is likely very often) the mightiest of his sayings, they are such as we should have expected when once we come to understand precisely the peculiarities of this brief Peræan ministry. But while these coincidences as to events, and repetitions as to discourses, do occur, there occur along with them, mixed up inseparably with them, many things both in the spirit and actions of Christ appropriate exclusively to this particular epoch of his life. No allusions to the time or manner of his own death, no reference to his departure and return, no pressing upon his disciples of the great duty of waiting and watching for his second advent, no prophecies of the approaching overturn of the Jewish economy, came from the lips of Jesus during his sojourn in Galilee. It was not till the time of his transfiguration that he began to speak of such matters privately to his disciples, and even then it was with bated breath. But now all the reasons for reserve are nearly, if not entirely gone. Jesus has set his face to go up to Jerusalem to die. He waits and works only a little longer in this remote region beyond Jordan, till the set time has come. Nothing that he can say or do here can have much effect in hastening or retarding the day of his decease. He may give free expression to those thoughts and sentiments which, now that it is drawing near, must be gathering often around the great event. And he may also safely draw aside, at least partially, the veil which hides the future, concealing at once the awful doom impending over Jerusalem, and his own speedy return to judge the nation that had rejected him. And this is what we now find him doing. Herod, under whose jurisdiction he still was in Peræa, had got alarmed. Fearing the people too much, having burden enough to bear from the beheading of the Baptist, he had no real intention to stretch out his hand to slay Jesus; but it annoyed him to find this new excitement breaking out in another part of his territories, and he got some willing emissaries among the Pharisees to go to Jesus, and to say, as if from private information, "Get thee out, and depart hence, for Herod will kill thee." And Jesus said, "Go ye and tell that fox"—who thinks so cunningly by working upon my fears to get rid of me before my time—"Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless, I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet

perish out of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." I have quoted especially these words, the most memorable of which were repeated afterwards, as they present a very accurate reflection of the peculiar mood of our Lord's mind, and the peculiar tone and texture of his ministry at this period.

First, There was a shortness, a decisiveness, a strength of utterance in the message sent to Herod, which belongs to all Christ's sayings of this period, whether addressed to friends or foes. His instructions, counsels, warnings to his own disciples, he expressed in the briefest, most emphatic terms. Was he speaking to them of faith, he said, "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye might say unto this sycamine-tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea, and it should obey you." Was he inculcating humility, he said, "Which of you having a servant ploughing or feeding cattle will say unto him by-and-by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? and will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken, and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all these things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants, we have done that which was our duty to do." Was he warning them against covetousness, he did it in the story of the rich man who, as he was making all his plans about throwing down his barns and building greater ones, had the words addressed to him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" Was he inculcating the necessity of self-denial, an entire surrender of the heart and life to him, he did it by turning to the multitude that followed him, and saying, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."\*

° Luke 14: 26, 27, 33 compared with Matthew 10: 37, 38. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me is not worthy of me."



There was curtness even in our Lord's dealings with those who, influenced with no hostile feeling, came to him with needless and impertinent inquiries. "Master," said one of the company, "speak to my brother that he may divide the inheritance with me. And he said, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" "There were present some that told him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices." It was not enough to tell them that they were wrong if they imagined that these men were sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered such things. They must have it also there told to them, "I say unto you, Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Marked especially by the same feature was our Lord's treatment of his enemies, the Pharisees. Their hostility to him had now reached its height. "They began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things; laying wait for him and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him," and "as they heard all these things they derided him." Luke 11:53, 54; 16:14. He gave them indeed good reason to be provoked. One of them invited him to dinner, and he went in and sat down to meat. The custom, whether expressed or not, that he had not first washed before dinner, gave Jesus the fit opportunity, and in terms very different from any he had employed in Galilee, he denounced the whole body to which his host belonged. "Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools! Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them." The first notes thus sounded of that terrible denunciation that rung through the courts of the temple as our Lord turned to take his last farewell of them and of his enemies.

Corresponding with this manner of speaking was our Lord's manner of action at this time. The three conspicuous miracles of this period were the two Sabbath cures and the healing of the ten lepers. Like all the others of the same class, the two former were spontaneous on Christ's part, wrought by him of his own free movement, and not upon any application or appeal. In a synagogue one Sabbath day he saw a woman that for eighteen years had been bowed together, and could in no way lift herself up. And when he saw her, "he said unto the woman, Thou art loosed from thine infirmity, and he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight and glorified God." Invited on another Sabbath-day to sup with one of the chief Pharisees, as he entered he saw before him a man which had the dropsy, brought there perhaps on purpose to see what he

would do. Turning to the assembled guests, Jesus put a single question to them, more direct than any he had put in Galilee. "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day?" They said nothing, and he "took the man and healed him, and let him go." Entering into a certain village, he saw before him ten lepers, who stood afar off, and lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." He said to them as soon as he saw them, "Go, show yourselves unto the priests." 'You have what you ask; you are cured already. Go, do what the cured are required by your law to do.' A few words are spoken at a distance, and all the men are at once healed. Is there not a quick promptitude displayed in all these cases, as if the actor had no words or time to spare?

— But, secondly, our Lord's thoughts were fixed much at this time upon the future—his own future and that of those around him. His chief work of teaching and healing was over. True, he was teaching and healing still, but it was by the way. All was done as by one that was on a journey—who had a great goal before him, upon which his eye was intently fixed. With singular minuteness of perspective, the dark close of his own earthly existence now rose up before him. "Behold," he said at its close, "we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge him, and put him to death." Luke 18:31-33. "I have a baptism to be baptized with," he said at the beginning of the period, "and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" Luke 12:50. "And the third day he shall rise again." But beyond the days, whether of his own death or of his resurrection, that other day of his second coming now for the first time is spoken of. He is pressing upon his disciples the great duty of taking no undue thought for the future—using the same terms and employing the same images as he had in the Sermon on the Mount; but he goes now a step farther than he had done then, closing all by saying, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord, when he cometh, shall find watching. . . . Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not." Luke 12:35, 36, 37, 40. Still in darkness as to the true nature of the kingdom of God, irritated, it may have been, that after the announcement that it had come so little should be said about it, so few tokens of its presence

should appear, the Pharisees demanded of him when the kingdom of God should come. He told them that they were looking for it in an altogether wrong direction. "The kingdom of God," he said, "cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo here! or Lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you"—for them, for us, for all men, one of the most important lessons that ever could be taught—that God's true spiritual kingdom is in nothing outward, but lies in the inward state and condition of the soul. Nevertheless, there was to be much outward and visible enough, much connected with that kingdom and his own lordship over it, of which these Pharisees were little dreaming, and which was destined to break upon them and upon their children with all the terror of a terrible surprise. This was in his thoughts when, after having corrected the error of the Pharisees as to the nature of the kingdom, he turned to his disciples and said to them, "The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. And they shall say to you, See here! or, See there! go not after them, nor follow them; for as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven, so shall also the Son of man be in his day. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation. And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot. . . . thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed"—our Lord enlarging upon this topic till in what he said upon this occasion you have the first rough sketch of that grand and awful picture presented in his last discourse to the apostles upon the ridge of Mount Olivet, preserved in Matt. 24.

That section of our Lord's life and labors, of which a short sketch has been presented, has been greatly overlooked—thrown, in fact, into the distance and obscurity which hangs over the region in which it was enacted. A careful study will guide to the conviction that in it Christ occupied a position intermediate between the one assumed in Galilee and the one taken up by him at Jerusalem in the days that immediately preceded his crucifixion.

## X.

## THE PARABLES OF THE PERÆAN MINISTRY.

DURING that ministry in Peræa whose course and character we have traced, our Lord delivered not fewer than ten parables—as many within these five months as in the two preceding years—a third of all that have been recorded as coming from his lips. The simple recital of them will satisfy you how fertile in this respect this period was, while a few rapid glances at the occasions which suggested some of them, and at their general drift and meaning, may help to confirm the representation already given of the peculiar features by which that stage in our Lord's life stands marked. We have before us here the parables of the Good Samaritan, the Rich Fool, the Barren Fig-tree, the Great Supper, the Lost Sheep, the Lost Piece of Money, the Prodigal Son, the Provident Steward, Dives and Lazarus, the Unjust Judge, the Pharisee and the Publican.

The first of these was given as an answer to the question, "Who is my neighbor?" and, as inculcating the lesson of a broad and unsectarian charity, might, with almost equal propriety, have been spoken at any time in the course of our Lord's ministry. It gives, however, an additional point and force to the leading incident of the story, when we think of it as delivered a few days after our Lord himself had received such treatment at the hands of the Samaritans as might have restrained him—had he not been himself the great example of the charity he inculcated—from making a Samaritan the hero of the tale. The second sprung from an application made to Jesus, the manner of whose treatment merits our particular regard. One of two brothers, both of whom appear to have been present on the occasion, said to him, "Master, speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me." A request not likely to have been made till Christ's fairness and fearlessness, in recoil from all falsehood and injustice, had been openly manifested and generally recognized—a request, however, grounded upon a total misconception of the nature and objects of his ministry. The dispute that had taken place between the two brothers was one for the law of the country to settle. For Christ to have interfered in such a case—to have pronounced any judgment on either side, would have been tantamount to an assumption on his part of the office of the civil magistrate. This Jesus promptly and peremptorily refused. "Man," said he, "who made me a judge over you?" More than once was Christ tempted



to enter upon the proper and peculiar province of the judge. More than once were certain difficult legal and political cases and questions submitted to him for decision; but he always, in the most marked and decisive manner, refused to entertain them. With the existing government and institutions of the country, with the ordinary administration of its laws, he never did and never would interfere. You can lay your hand upon no one law, upon no one practice, having reference purely to man's temporal estate, which had the sanction of the public authorities, that Jesus condemned or refused to comply with. No doubt there was great tyranny being practised, there were unjust laws, iniquitous institutions in operation, but he did not take it upon him to expose, much less to resist them. For the guidance of men in all the different relations in which they can be placed to one another he announced and expounded the great and broad, eternal and immutable, principles of justice and of mercy. But with the application of these principles to particular cases he did not intermeddle. He carefully and deliberately avoided such intermeddling. It is possible indeed that the demand made upon him in the instance now before us, may not have been for any authoritative decision upon a matter that fell properly to be determined by the legal tribunals. Had the claim been one that could be made good at law, it is not so likely that Jesus would have been appealed to in the matter. The object of the petitioner may simply have been to get Christ to act as an umpire or arbitrator in a dispute which the letter of the law might have regulated in one way, and the principle of equity in another. But neither in that character would Jesus interfere. "Man, who made me a divider over you?" He would not mix himself up with this or any other family dispute about property. Willing as he was to earn for himself the blessedness of the peacemaker, he was not prepared to try and earn it in this way. It was no part of his office, as head of that great spiritual kingdom which he came to establish upon the earth, to act as arbitrator between such conflicting claims as these two brothers might present. To set up the kingdom of righteousness and peace and love in both their hearts—that was his office. Let that be done; then, without either lawsuit or arbitration, the brothers could settle the matter between themselves. But so long as that was not done—so long as either one or both of these brothers was acting in the pure spirit of selfishness—there was no proper room or opportunity for Jesus to interfere; nor would interposition, even if he had ventured on it, have realized any of those ends which his great mission to our earth was intended to accomplish.

The example of non-intervention thus given by Christ, rightly interpreted, has a wide range. It applies to disputes between kings and subjects, masters and servants, employers and employed. These in the form that they ordinarily assume, it is not the office of Jesus to determine. That he who rules over men should be just, ruling in the fear of the Lord; that we should obey them that rule over us, living a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty—this he proclaims, but he does not determine what just ruling is, nor what the limits of obedience are, nor how, in any case of conflict, the right adjustment is to be made between the prerogatives of the crown and the liberties of the subject; and if ever discord should arise between oppressive rulers and exacting subjects who, with equal pride, equal selfishness, equal ambition, try the one to keep and the other to grasp as much power as possible, in such a struggle Christianity, if true to her own spirit and to her Founder's example, stands aloof, refusing to take either side.

"Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal." Such is the rule that Christianity lays down; but what exactly, in any particular case, would be the just and equal thing to do—what would be the proper wages for the master to offer and the servant to receive—she leaves that to be adjusted between masters and servants, according to the varying circumstances by which the wages of all kinds of labor must be regulated. It has been made a question whether, in our great manufacturing cities, capital gives to labor its fair share of the profits. One can conceive that question raised by the employed as against their employers, in the spirit of a purely selfish and aggressive discontent; and that, so raised, it might provoke and lead on to open collision between the two. Here, again, in a struggle, originating thus, and carried on in such a spirit, Christianity refuses to take a part. She would that employers should be more liberal, more humane, more tenderly considerate, not only of the wants, but of the feelings of those by the labor of whose hands it is that their wealth is created. She would that the employed should be less selfish, less envious, less irritable—more contented. It is not by a clashing of opposing interests, but by a rivalry of just and generous sentiments on either side, that she would keep the balance even—the only way of doing so productive of lasting good.

After correcting the error into which the applicant to him had fallen—as though the settlement of legal questions, or family disputes about the division of estates, lay within his province—Jesus took advantage of the opportunity to expose and rebuke the principle which probably actuated both brothers, the one to withhold and the

other to demand. Turning to the general audience by which he was surrounded, he said, "Take heed and beware of covetousness." The word here rendered "covetousness" is a peculiar and very expressive one; it means the spirit of greed—that ever-restless, ever-craving, ever-unsatisfied spirit, which, whatever a man has, is ever wanting more, and the more he gets still thirsts for more. A passion which has a strange history; often of honest enough birth—the child of forethought, but changing its character rapidly with its growth—getting prematurely blind—losing sight of the end in the means—till wealth is loved and sought and grasped and hoarded, not for the advantages it confers, the enjoyment it purchases, but simply for itself—to gratify that lust of possession which has seized upon the soul, and makes it all its own. It was to warn against the entrance and spread and power of this passion that Jesus spake a parable unto them, saying, "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Beyond the circumstance already noted, that the request which suggested it was one more appropriate to a late than to an early period of our Lord's ministry, we have nothing in the parable, any more than in that of the Good Samaritan, which specially connects it with the ministry in Peræa. It is different with the two that come next in order—that of the Barren Fig-tree and of the Great Supper.

Some who were present once told Jesus of those Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He told them, in reply, of the eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, repeating, as he did so, the warning, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." We miss the full force of the prophetic knell thus sounded in their ears, in consequence of the word "likewise" being often used by us as equivalent to "also," or "as well." The intimation, as given by Jesus, was that they would perish in the same manner. The work done by the Roman sword, the deaths caused by a single falling tower, were brought before the mind of Jesus; and instantly he thinks of the wider sweep of that sword, and the falling of all the towers and battlements of Jerusalem; and when that terrible calamity

(of which we have here the first obscure hint or prophecy that came from the lips of Jesus) descended upon the Jewish people, then to the very letter were his words fulfilled, as thousands fell beneath the stroke of the Roman sabres—slain, as the Galileans were, in the midst of their passover sacrifices—and multitudes were crushed to death beneath the falling ruins of their beloved Jerusalem. None but Christ himself, none of those who listened for the first time to these warning words, could tell to what they pointed. Forty years were to intervene before the impending doom came to be executed upon the devoted city. No sign or token of its approach was visible. Those around him, some of whom were to witness and to share in the calamity, were living in security, not knowing how rapidly the period of forbearance was running out, not knowing that the time then present was but for them a season of respite. It was to indicate how false that feeling of security was, to give them the true key to the Lord's present dealings with them as a people, that Jesus told them of a fig-tree planted in a vineyard, to which for three successive years the owner of the vineyard had come seeking fruit and finding none; turning to the dresser of the vineyard, and saying, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" And the dresser of the vineyard said to him, "Lord, let it alone this year also, till I dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." And there, at the point of the respite sought and granted, the action of the parable ceases. Did the year of grace go by in vain? Was all the fresh labor of the dresser fruitless? Was the tree at last cut down? All about this the parable leaves untold. It had been the image of the end, as it crossed the Saviour's thoughts, that had suggested the parable; but the time had not yet come for his going farther in the history of the tree than the telling that its last year of trial had arrived, and that if it remained fruitless it was to be cut down. The story of the tree was, in fact, a prophetic allegory, meant to represent the state and prospects of the Jewish people, for whom so much had been done in the years that were past, and so much more in the year then present: the story stopping abruptly at the very stage which was then being described—not without an ominous foreshadowing of the dark doom in reserve for impenitent Israel—the Israel that refused to benefit by all the care and the toil that Jesus had lavished on it. It is, of course, not only easy, but altogether legitimate and beneficial, for the broader purposes of Christian teaching, to detach this parable from its primary connections and its immediate objects; but, as it ever should be the first aim in reading any of our Lord's sayings to under-



stand their significance as at first uttered, in this instance we are left in no doubt or uncertainty that it was the generation of the Jews then living, then upon probation, then in the last stage of their trial—that the fig-tree of the parable, in the first instance, was intended to represent. Regarded so, how singularly appropriate to the time of its delivery, in its form and structure, does the parable appear! It is the first of a series of allegorical prophecies, in which the whole after-history of the people and age, to which Jesus may be said to have himself belonged, stands portrayed. Never before had any hint of the outward or historical issues of his advent, so far as the generation which rejected him was concerned, dropped from the lips of Jesus. Such allusion, we may say with reverence, would have been mistimed had it been made earlier. It was suitable that the great trial upon which his mission to them put that generation should be somewhat advanced, be drawing near its close, before the judicial visitations, consequent upon its treatment of the Messiah, should be declared. And here, in the narrative of St. Luke, the prophetic announcement meets us, as made for the first time after our Lord's labors in Galilee are over, and he is waiting to go up to Jerusalem to be crucified; and, as the first hint of the kind given, it is, as was fitting, brief and limited in its range, throwing a clear beam of light upon the time then present, leaving the future enveloped with a threatening gloom.

— The same things are true of the parable that comes next in order in the pages of St. Luke. It carries the story of the future a little farther on; but it, too, stops abruptly. A great supper is made, to which many had been invited. The servant is sent out to say to them that were bidden, "Come, for all things are now ready." With one consent, but giving different reasons, they all excuse themselves. The servants are sent out first to the streets and lanes of the city, then to the highways and hedges, to bring others in, that the table may be filled. The narrative closes with the emphatic utterance of the giver of the feast—"For I say unto you, that none of these men that were bidden shall taste of my supper." Here, in the first invited guests, we at once recognize the Jews, or rather that section of them which stood represented by their lawyers and Pharisees, among whom Jesus was at the time sitting. They had had the invitation long in their hands, and professed to have accepted it; but when the time came, and the call came from the lips of Jesus to enter the kingdom, to partake of the prepared supper, they all, with one consent, had made excuse. And they were to reap this as the fruit of their doing so—that the poor, the lame, the halt, the blind, the wanderers of the

highways and hedges, were to be brought in, and they were to be excluded. Of this result the parable gives a clear enough foreshadowing; but it does not actually reveal the issue. It stops with the second mission of the servants and the declaration of a fixed purpose on the part of the giver of the entertainment: but it does not describe the supper itself, nor tell how the last errand of the servant prospered, nor how the fixed resolution of the master of the house to exclude was carried out. Over these it leaves the same obscurity hanging, that in the preceding parable was left hanging over the cutting down of the tree. There is a step taken in advance. Beyond the rejection of the Jews, we have the gathering in of the Gentiles in their stead alluded to, but obviously the main purpose of the parable as indicated by the point at which it stops and the last speech of the master of the house, which is left sounding in our ears, is to proclaim that those who had rejected the first invitation that Christ had brought should, in their turn, be themselves rejected of him. Here, then, we have another parable fitting in with the former, and in common with it perfectly harmonizing with that particular epoch at which St. Luke represents it as having been delivered.

The parable of the Great Supper was spoken at table, in the house of a chief Pharisee, in the midst of a company of Pharisees and lawyers. Soon afterwards, Jesus appears to us in the centre of a very different circle. "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners to hear him." Jesus welcomed them with joy, devoted himself with the readiest zeal to their instruction. The Pharisees who were present were offended at what they had noted or had been told about the familiarity of his intercourse with these publicans and sinners; his acceptance of their invitations; his permitting them to use freedom even with his person. "And they murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." The Pharisees in Galilee had done the same thing; and that St. Luke, in the fifteenth chapter, is not referring to the same incident that St. Matthew, in his ninth chapter, has recorded, but is relating what happened over again in Peræa, just as it had occurred before in Galilee, is evident from this, that he himself, in his fifth chapter, records the previous Galilean incident. In answer to the first murmurings that broke out against him for companying with publicans and sinners, Jesus had contented himself with saying, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they which are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Now, however, he makes a longer apology and defence. He will let these murmurers know what it is in the condition of these publicans and sinners which has drawn him

to them and fixed on them his regard—why and for what it is that he has attached himself so closely to them—even to bring them to repentance, win them back to God. He will draw aside for a moment the veil that hides the invisible world, and let it be seen what is thought elsewhere, among the angels of God, of that ready reception of sinners on his part which has evoked such aversion. Christ does this in three parables—that of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Piece of Money, and the Lost Son. Taken together, these three parables compose our Lord's reply to the censure passed upon his conduct by the Pharisees, and they do so by presenting at once the whole history of that recovery from their lost condition, which it was Christ's great object to see realized in those with whom he associated, and the effect of such recovery as contemplated by those who, not themselves feeling their need of it, looked askance upon the whole procedure by which it was realized; for just as clearly as the history of the loss and the recovery of the one sheep, and the one piece of money, and the one son, were intended to represent that conversion to God which it was the main aim of Christ's converse with the publicans and sinners to effect, just as clearly do the ninety-nine sheep, and the nine pieces of money, and the elder brother, stand as representatives of these murmuring scribes and Pharisees—those 'just persons, just in their own eyes, who needed no repentance—thought they did not need it, and who, not understanding the nature or the necessity of the work of conversion in others, condemned the Saviour when engaged in this work. There is a difference, indeed, in the three parables, so far as they bear upon their character and conduct. The ninety and nine sheep and the nine pieces of money, being either inanimate or unintelligent, afforded no fit opportunity of a symbolic exhibition of the temper and disposition of the Pharisees. This opportunity was afforded in the third parable, and is there largely taken advantage of. The elder brother—the type or emblem of those against whom Jesus is defending himself—is there brought prominently out upon the stage: a full revelation of his distrustful, spiteful, envious spirit is made. If thirteen verses are given to the story of the younger brother, the prodigal son, no fewer than eight are given to that of the elder brother. The thirteen verses too, it is to be remembered, cover the incidents of years; the eight, those of a single evening. Naturally and properly, the deeper, livelier, more universal interest that attaches to the story of the younger overshadows that of the elder brother—so deeply, indeed, that we think and speak of the parable as that of the Prodigal Son; but as originally spoken, and for the purposes originally contemplated, the part played by the elder brother had





THE PRODIGAL SON IN HIS FATHER'S ARMS.



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much more importance assigned to it than we now are disposed to give it. He is out in the field when his younger brother is so gladly welcomed and has the fatted calf killed to celebrate his recovery. Returning in the evening, he hears the sounds of the music and the dancing within the happy dwelling. He calls one of the servants, and hears from him what has happened. And now all the fountains of selfishness and pride, and envy and malignity, pour out their bitter waters. He sulkily refuses to go in. His father comes out and remonstrates with him. But he will listen to no entreaty. He forgets for the moment all his family relationships. He will not call his parent father; he will not speak to him as to one to whom he had been indebted—rather he will charge him with injustice and unkindness; he will not call the once lost, but now found one his brother—"this thy son" is the way that he speaks of him. Notwithstanding all his unfilial, unbrotherly, contemptuous arrogance, how kindly, how patiently is he dealt with; how mildly is the father's vindication made; how gently is the rebuke administered! Did it soften him, subdue him? did he, too, come to see how unworthy he was to be the son of such a father? melted into penitence, did he too, at last throw himself into his father's arms, and in him was another lost one found? Just as in the parable of the Barren Fig-tree and the Great Supper, the curtain drops as the scene should come upon the stage in which the final fortunes of those of whom we take the elder brother as the type should have been disclosed. And in so closing, this parable goes far to proclaim its birth-time as belonging to the period when Jesus was just beginning to lift the veil which hung over the shrouded future of impenitent and unbelieving Israel.

The next parable, that of the Unjust Steward, was addressed particularly, and we may say, exclusively, to the disciples. It contains no note of time by which the date of its delivery might be determined. We are struck, however, with finding that throughout the period now before us, it was as servants waiting and watching for the return of their master, as stewards to whom their absent lord has committed the care of his household during a temporary departure, that the apostles and disciples were generally addressed. And even as the woes impending over doomed Israel were now filling the Saviour's eye, the first pre-intimation of them breaking forth from his lips, even so does the condition of the mother church at Jerusalem, in the dreary years of persecution that preceded the destruction of Jerusalem, seem to have lain at this time heavy upon his heart. It was with reference to the sorrows and trials that his servants should in that interval endure, and to the wrongs inflicted on them, that the

parable of the Unjust Judge was spoken.— Its capital lesson was importunity in prayer, but the prayer that was to go up so often, and was at last to be heard, was prayer from the persecuted while suffering beneath the lash. This parable, therefore, like so many of its immediate predecessors, exactly fits the season at which St. Luke reports it as having been spoken.

Were it not for the interest which attaches to the question whether or not the chapters of St. Luke's gospel, from the ninth to the eighteenth, present us with a true, and faithful, and orderly narrative of a period in our Lord's life of which no other of the evangelists tell us anything, I should not have dwelt so long upon this topic. I shall have gained the end I had in view, however, if I have brought distinctly out to view the five months that elapsed after Christ's farewell to Galilee, as spent, for the most part, in the regions beyond the Jordan, as occupied with a ministry bearing evident tokens of a transition period, in which with his face set steadfastly towards the great decess he was to accomplish at Jerusalem, our Lord's thoughts were much occupied with the future—the future which concerned himself, his followers, the nation. The events, the miracles, the parables of the period, are all in harmony; and as a whole we may safely say, that they carry in their bosom internal evidence of their having been rightly located by St. Luke, unsuitable as they would have been either for any preceding or any posterior section of our Lord's life. It is but attributing to Christ our humanity in true and perfect form to imagine that the ending of his labors in Galilee and Judea, and the near prospect of his death, threw him into an attitude of thought and feeling congenial to the circumstances in which he was placed. It was natural that the unseen and the future should at this time absorb the seen and the present. It may be a fancy, but I have thought, while reading again and again the ten parables which belong to this period, that far more frequently and more vividly than ever before in his ministry is the invisible world laid bare. The spirit summoned that night into the immediate presence of its judge—the angels rejoicing over each repentant returning sinner—the bosom of Abraham upon which Lazarus is represented as reposing—the hell into which the soul of the rich man in dying sinks—where in any of the preceding addresses or parables of our Lord have we the same unfolding of the world that lies beyond the grave? Is it not as one who is himself holding closer fellowship with that world into which he is so soon himself to enter that Jesus speaks? One thing is not a fancy, that more frequently and more urgently than ever before does Jesus press upon his disciples the

duty of holding such fellowship. By the story of the friend at midnight awakened by the continued and repeated solicitations of his neighbor, by that of the unjust judge moved to redress her wrongs by the simple importunity of the widow, by that of the prayer of the poor publican heard at once and answered, by the appeal to their own generosity as fathers in the treatment of their children, did Jesus at this time seek to draw his disciples to the throne of grace, and keep them there, praying on in the assurance that earnest, renewed, repeated petitions offered in sincerity and faith shall never go up to God in vain. And who is he that encourages us thus to pray—that gives us the assurance that our prayers will be answered? Is he not our own great and gracious Advocate, who takes our imperfect petitions as they spring from our defiled lips, our divided and sinful hearts, and turns them into his own all-powerful, all-prevailing pleadings as he presents them to the Father?

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## XI.

### — THE GOOD SAMARITAN.\*

“BEHOLD, a certain lawyer stood up”—in all likelihood within some synagogue upon a Sabbath-day. In rising to put a question to Jesus, he was guilty of no impertinent intrusion. Jesus had assumed the office of a public teacher, and it was by questions put and answered that this office was ordinarily discharged. This lawyer “stood up and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” His object might have been to perplex and entangle—to involve Christ in a difficulty from which he perceived or hoped that he would be unable to extricate himself. Questions of this kind were often put to Jesus, their very character and construction betraying their intent. But the question of the lawyer is not one of this nature. Something more than a mere idle curiosity, or a desire to test the extent of Christ’s capacity or knowledge, appears to have prompted it. It is not presented in the bare abstract form. It is not, “Master, what should be done that eternal life be inherited?” but, “Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” It looks as if it came from one feeling a true, deep, and personal interest in the inquiry.

The manner in which our Lord entertained it confirms this impression. Questions of many kinds from many quarters were address-



ed to Jesus. With one or two memorable exceptions, they were all answered, but in different ways; whenever any insidious and sinister purpose lay concealed beneath apparent homage, the answer was always such as to show that the latent guile lay open as day to his eye. But there is nothing of that description here. In the first instance, indeed, he will make the questioner go as far as he can in answering his own question. He will tempt—that is, try or prove him in turn. Knowing that he is a scribe well instructed in the law, he will throw him back upon his own knowledge. Before saying anything about eternal life, or the manner of its inheritance, Jesus says, “What is written in the law? how readest thou?” It is altogether remarkable that in answer to a question so very general as this—one which admitted of such various replies—this man should at once have laid his hand upon two texts, standing far apart from each other—the first occurring early in Deuteronomy, the second far on in Leviticus—texts having no connection with each other in the outer form or letter of the law, to which no peculiar or pre-eminent position is there assigned, which are nowhere brought into juxtaposition, nor are quoted as if, when brought together, they formed a summary or compound of the whole; the two very texts, in fact, which, on an after occasion, in answer to another scribe, our Lord himself cited as the two upon which all the law and the prophets hung. The man who, overlooking the whole mass of ceremonial or ritualistic ordinances as being of altogether inferior consideration, not once to be taken into account when the question was one as to a man’s inheriting eternal life, who so readily and so confidently selected these two commandments as containing the sum and substance of the whole, gave good proof how true his reading of the law was. “And Jesus said to him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.” ‘Take but thine own right reading of the law, fulfil aright those two great precepts, Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, Love thy neighbor as thyself, and thou shalt live; live in loving and in serving, or if thou reachest not in this way the life thou aimest at, thou wilt at least, by the very failure, be taught to look away from the precepts to the promises, and so be led to the true source and fountain of eternal life in the free grace of the Father through me the Son.’

Trying to escape from the awkward position of one out of whose own lips so simple and satisfactory a reply to his own question had been extracted—desiring to justify himself for still appearing as a questioner, by showing that there was yet something about which there remained a doubt—he said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” We may fairly assume that one so well read as this man was

as to the true meaning of the law, was equally well read as to the popular belief and practice regarding it. He knew what interpretation was popularly put on the expression, "thy neighbor," which stood embodied in the practice of his countrymen. He knew with what supercilious contempt they looked down upon the whole Gentile world around them—calling them the "uncircumcised," the "dogs," the "polluted," the "unclean,"—with what a double contempt they regarded the Samaritans living by their side. He knew that it was no part of the popular belief to regard a Samaritan as a neighbor. So far from this, the Jew would have no dealings with him, cursed him publicly in his synagogue, would not receive his testimony in a court of justice, prayed that he might have no portion in the resurrection. He knew all this—had himself been brought up to the belief and practice. But he was not satisfied with it. Along with that fine instinct of the understanding which had enabled him to extract the pure and simple essence out of the great body of the Jewish code, there was that finer instinct of the heart which taught him that it was within too narrow bounds that the love to our neighbor had been limited. He saw and felt that these bounds should be widened; but how far? upon what principle, and to what extent? Anxious to know this, he says, "And who is my neighbor?"

Christ answers by what we take to be the recital of an incident that had actually occurred. A fictitious story—a parable invented for the occasion—would not so fully have answered the purpose he had in view. A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. We are not told who or what he was: but the conditions and object of the narrative require that he was a Jew. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho—though short, and at certain seasons of the year much frequented—was yet lonely and perilous to the last degree, especially to a single and undefended traveller. It passes through the heart of the eastern division of the wilderness of Judea, and runs for a considerable space along the abrupt and winding sides of a deep and rocky ravine, offering the greatest facilities for concealment and attack. From the number of robberies and murders committed in it, Jews of old called it "the Bloody Road," and it retains its character still. We travelled it, guarded by a dozen Arabs, who told, by the way, of an English party that the year before had been attacked and plundered and stripped, and we were kept in constant alarm by the scouts sent out beforehand announcing the distant sight of dangerous-looking Bedouins. All the way from Bethany to the plain of the Jordan is utter solitude—one single ruin, perhaps that of the very inn to which the wounded Jew was carried, being the only sign

of human habitation that meets the eye. Somewhere along this road, the solitary traveller of whom Jesus speaks is attacked. Perhaps he carries his all along with him, and, unwilling to part with it, stands upon his defence, wishing to sell life and property as dearly as he can. Perhaps he carries but little—nothing that the thievish band into whose hands he falls much value. Whether it is that a struggle has taken place, or that exasperation at disappointment whets their wrath, the robbers of the wilderness strip their victim of his raiment, wound him, and leave him there half dead. As he lies in that condition on the roadside, first a priest, and then a Levite approaches. A single glance is sufficient for the priest; the Levite stops, and takes a longer, steadier look. The effect in either case is the same—abhorrence and aversion. As men actuated by some other sentiment beyond that of mere insensibility, they shrink back, putting as great a distance as they can between them and the poor naked wounded man; as if there were pollution in proximity—as if the very air around the man were infected—as if to go near him, much more to touch, to lift, to handle him, were to be defiled. To what are we to attribute this? To sheer indifference—to stony-hearted inhumanity? That might explain their passing without a feeling of sympathy excited or a hand of help held out, but it will not explain the quick and sensitive recoil—the passing by on the other side. Is it, then, the bare horror of the sight that drives them back? If there be something to excite horror, surely there is more to move pity. That naked, quivering body, those gaping, bleeding wounds, the pale and speechless lips, the eyes so dull and heavy with pain, yet sending out such imploring looks—where is the human heart, left free to its own spontaneous actings, they could fail to touch? But these men's hearts—the hearts of the priest and Levite—are not left thus free: not that their hearts are destitute of the common sympathies of our nature—not that their breasts are steeled against every form and kind of human woe—not that, in other circumstances, they would see a wounded, half dead neighbor lying, and leave him unpitied and unhelped. No! but because their hearts—as tender, it may have been, by nature as those of others—have been trained in the school of national and religious bigotry, and have been taught there, not the lesson of sheer and downright inhumanity, but of that narrow exclusiveness which would limit all their sympathies and all their aid to those of their own country and their own faith. The priest and the Levite have been up at Jerusalem, discharging in their turn their offices in the temple. They have got quickened afresh there all the prejudices of their calling; they are returning to Jericho, with all

their prejudices strong within their breasts; they see the sad sight by the way; they pause a moment to contemplate it. Had it been a brother priest, a brother Levite, a brother Jew that lay in that piteous plight, none readier to help than they; but he is naked, there is nothing on him or about him to tell who or what he is—he is speechless, and can say nothing for himself. He may be a hated Edomite, he may be a vile Samaritan, for aught that they can tell. The possibility of this is enough. Touch, handle, help such a man! they might be doing thereby a far greater outrage to their Jewish prejudices than they did to the mere sentiment of indiscriminate pity by passing him by, and so they leave him as they find him, in haste to get past the dangerous neighborhood, to congratulate themselves on the wonderful escape they had made—for the wounds of the poor wretch were fresh, and bleeding freely—it could have been but shortly before they came up that the catastrophe had occurred; had they started but an hour or two earlier from Jerusalem his fate might have been theirs. Glad at their own good fortune, they hurry on, finding many an excuse besides the real one for their neglect.

How then are we exactly to characterize their conduct? It was a triumph of prejudice over humanity—the very kind of error and of crime against which Jesus wished to guard the inquiring lawyer. And it was at once with singular fidelity to nature, and the strictest pertinence to the question with which he was dealing, and to the occasion that called it forth, that it was in the conduct of a priest and of a Levite that this triumph stood displayed—for were they not the fittest types and representatives of that malign and sinister influence which their religion—misunderstood and misapplied—had exerted over the common sympathies of humanity? Had they read aright their own old Hebrew code, it would have taught them quite a different lesson. Its broad and genial humanity is one of the marked attributes by which, as compared with that of every other religion then existing, theirs was distinguished. “I will have mercy and not sacrifice,” was the motto which its great Author had inscribed upon its forehead. Its weightier matters were judgment and mercy, and faith and love. It had taken the stranger under its special and benignant protection. Twice over it had proclaimed, “Thou shalt not see thy brother’s ass or thy brother’s ox fall down by the way and hide thyself from them—thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again.” And was a man not much better than an ass or an ox? And should not this priest and Levite—had they read aright their own Jewish law—have lifted up again their prostrate bleeding brother? But they had misread that law. They had misconceived



and perverted that segregation from all the other communities of the earth which it had taught the Jewish people to cultivate. Instead of seeing in this temporary isolation the means of distributing the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom wide over all the earth, they had regarded it as raising them to a position of proud superiority from which they might say to every other nation, "Stand back, for we are holier than you." And once perverted thus, the whole strength of their religious faith went to intensify the spirit of nationality, and inflame it into a passion, within whose close and sultry atmosphere the lights even of common human kindness were extinguished. It was in a priest and in a Levite that we should expect to see this spirit carried out to its extreme degree, as it has been always in the priestly caste that the fanatical piety which has trampled under foot the kindest sentiments of humanity has shown itself in its darkest and most repulsive form.

After the priest and Levite have gone by, a certain Samaritan approaches. He too is arrested. He too turns aside to look upon this pitiable spectacle. For aught that he can tell, this naked wounded man may be a Jew. There were many Jews and but few Samaritans travelling ordinarily by this road. The chances were a thousand to one that he was a Jew. And this Samaritan must have shared in the common feelings of his people towards the Jews—hatred repaying hatred. But he thinks not of distinction of race or faith. The sight before him of a human being—a brother man in the extremity of distress—swallows up all such thoughts. As soon as he sees him he has compassion on him. He alights—strips off a portion of his own raiment—brings out the oil and the wine that he had provided for his own comfort by the way—tenderly binds up the wounds—gently lifts the body up and places it on his own beast—moves with such gentle pace away as shall least exasperate the recent wounds. Intent upon his task, he forgets his own affairs—forgets the danger of lingering so long in such a neighborhood—is not satisfied until he reaches the inn by the roadside. Having done so much, may he not leave him now? No, he cannot part with him till he sees what a night's rest will do. The morning sees his rescued brother better. Now he may depart. Yes, but not till he has done all he can to secure that he be properly waited on till all danger is over. He may be a humane enough man, the keeper of this inn, but days will pass before the sufferer can safely travel, and it may not be safe or wise to count upon the continuance of his kindness. The Samaritan gives the innkeeper enough to keep his guest for six or seven days, and tells him that whatever he spends more will be repaid. Having



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thus done all that the most thoughtful kindness could suggest to promote and secure recovery, he goes to bid his rescued brother farewell. Perhaps the good Samaritan leaves him in utter ignorance of who or what he was. Perhaps those pale and trembling lips are still unable to articulate his thanks—but that parting look in which a heart's whole swelling gratitude goes out—it goes with him and kindles a strange joy. He never saw the sun look half so bright—he never saw the plain of Jordan look half so fair—a happier man than he never trod the road to Jericho. True, he had lost a day, but he had saved a brother; and while many a time in after life the look of that stark and bleeding body as he first saw it lying on the roadside would come to haunt his fancy—ever behind it would there come that look of love and gratitude to chase the spectral form away, and fill his heart with light and joy.

Here too is a triumph, not one, however, of prejudice over humanity, but of humanity over prejudice. For it were idle to think that it was because of any superiority over the priest and the Levite in his abstract ideas of the sphere of neighborhood, and of the claims involved in simple participation of humanity, that this Samaritan acted as he did. No, it was simply because he obeyed the impulses of a kind and loving heart, and that these were strong enough to lift him above all those prejudices of tribe and caste and faith, to which he, equally with the Jew, was liable.

And was there not good reason for it, that in the records of our Christian faith, in the teachings of its Divine Author, one solemn warning of this kind should be lifted up—one illustrious example of this kind should be exhibited? Our Redeemer came to establish another and closer bond of brotherhood than the earth before had known, to knit all true believers in the pure and holy fellowship of a common faith, a common hope, a common heirship of eternal life through him. But he would have us from the beginning know that this bond, so new, so sacred, so divine, was never meant to thwart or violate that other broader universal tie that binds the whole family of our race together, that makes each man the neighbor of every other man that tenants this earthly globe. Christianity, like Judaism, has been perverted—perverted so as seriously to interfere with, sometimes almost entirely to quench, the sentiment of a universal philanthropy; but it has been so only when its true genius and spirit have been misapprehended; for of all influences that have ever descended upon our earth, none has ever done so much to break down the walls of separation, that differences of country, language, race, religion, have raised between man and man, and to diffuse the spirit



of that brotherly love which overleaps all these temporary and artificial fences and boundary lines—which, subject to no law of limits, is a law itself—which, like the air and light of heaven, diffuses itself everywhere around over the broad field of humanity—tempering all, uniting all, brightening all, smoothing asperities, harmonizing discords, pouring a healing balm into all the rankling sores of life.

“Which now of the three,” said Jesus to the lawyer, “was neighbor to him that fell among the thieves?”

Ashamed to say plainly “The Samaritan,” yet unwilling or unable to exhibit any hesitation in his reply, he said, “He that showed mercy on him.” Then said Jesus unto him, “Go, and do thou likewise.” It is not “Listen and applaud,” it is “Go and do.” If there be anything above another that distinguishes the conduct of the good Samaritan, it is its thoroughly practical character. He wasted no needless sympathy, he shed no idle tears. There are wounds that may be dressed—he puts forth his own hand immediately to the dressing of them. There is a life that may be saved—he sets himself to use every method by which it may be saved. He gives more than time, more than money: he gives personal service. And that is the true human charity that shows itself in prompt, efficient, self-forgetful, self-sacrificing help. You can get many soft, susceptible, sentimental spirits to weep over any scene or tale of woe. But it is not those who will weep the readiest over the sorrow who will do the most to relieve it. Sympathy has its own selfishness; there is a luxury in the tears that it loves idly to indulge. Tears will fill the eye—should fill the eye—but the hand of active help will brush them away, that the eye may see more clearly what the hand has to do. Millions have heard or read the tale of the Good Samaritan. Their eyes have glistened and their hearts have been all aglow in approving, applauding sympathy; but of all these millions, how many are there who imitate the example given, who have given a day from their business to a suffering brother, who have waited by the sick, and with their own hand have ministered to his wants?

— The beauty and force of that special lesson which the story of the Good Samaritan was intended to convey is mightily enhanced as we remember how recently our Lord himself had suffered from the intolerance of the Samaritans; only a few days before, we know not how few, having been refused entrance into one of their villages. He himself then gave an exhibition of the very virtue he designed to inculcate. But why speak of this as any single minor act of universal love to mankind on his part? Were not his life and death one continuous manifestation of that love? Yes, bright as that single act of

the Good Samaritan shines in the annals of human kindness, all its brightness fades away in the full blaze of that love of Jesus, which saw not a single traveller, but our whole race, cast forth naked, bleeding, dying, and gave not a day of his time, nor a portion of his raiment, but a whole lifetime of service and of suffering, that they might not perish, but have everlasting life.



## XII.

### THE LORD'S PRAYER.\*

AT some time and in some place of which we must be content to remain ignorant, Jesus had gone apart from his disciples to pray. They had noticed his doing so frequently before; but there was a peculiarity in this case. He had either separated himself from them by so short a distance, or they had come upon him afterwards so silently and unobserved, that they stood and listened to him as he prayed. Perhaps they had never previously overheard our Lord when engaged in private devotion. The impression made on them was so deep, the prayer that they had been listening to was so unlike any that they themselves had ever offered—if that and that only be prayer, they feel they know so little how to pray—that, on the impulse of the moment, one of them, when Jesus had ceased, said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.” We do not stand in the same peculiar external circumstances with him who preferred this request, but the same need is ours. There is access still for us into the presence of our Redeemer, nor is there in coming to him one petition that should spring more quickly to our lips, one that can come from them more appropriately, than this—“Lord, teach us to pray.” To pray is to realize the presence of the Supreme—to come into the closest possible connection with the greatest of Beings. To pray is to lay our imperfect tribute of acknowledgment at his feet—to supplicate for that which we know that he only can bestow—to bring our sin to him, so that it may be forgiven—our wants to him, so that he may supply them as seems best in his sight. What is our warrant for making such approach? how may it best be made? what should we ask for? and how should we ask for it? None can answer these questions for us as Jesus could. How gladly, then, should we welcome, and how carefully should we study such answers as he has been pleased to give!

On bringing together all that Christ has declared in the way of precept, and illustrated in the way of example, I think it will appear that as there is no one duty of the religious life of such preëminent importance in its direct bearing on our spiritual estate, so there is no one about the manner of whose right discharge fuller instructions have been left by him. Thus, in the instance now before us, in answer to the request presented to him, he at once recited a prayer, which stands as the pattern or model of all true prayer. Without entering into a minute examination of the separate clauses of this prayer, let me crave your attention to three of the features by which it is preëminently distinguished.

1. Its shortness and simplicity. It is very plain; not a part or petition of it which, as soon as it is capable of praying, a child cannot easily understand. It is very brief, occupying but a minute or two in the utterance; so that there is not a season or occasion for prayer in which it might not be employed. There is no ambiguity, no circumlocution, no expansion, no repetition here. It is throughout the direct expression of desire; that desire in each case clothing itself in the simplest, compactest form of speech. In the Sermon on the Mount, when Jesus first repeated this prayer, he offered it in contrast with the tedious amplifications and reiterations of which the Jewish and heathen prayers were then ordinarily composed. The Jews, as the heathen of old, as the Mussulmans still, had their set hours throughout the day for prayer; and so fond were they of exhibiting the punctuality and precision and devoutness with which the duty was discharged, that they often arranged it so that the set hour should find them in some public place. Such practice, as altogether contrary to the spirit and object of true devotion, as part of that mere dead formalism which it was the great object of his teaching to unmask, Jesus utterly condemned. "When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him. After this manner pray ye." It was as an antidote to the kind of prayers then generally employed, as well as a pattern specimen for after use within the Church, that Jesus then proceeded to repeat the

prayer which has been called by his name. It was not to lie by or be deposited as a mere standard measure by which other prayers were to be tried. It was to be used—to be repeated. When, many months after its first recital, it was said to Jesus, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples,” he was not satisfied with saying, “Pray generally in such a mode or style as this;” he prescribed the very words, “When ye pray, *say*,” and he repeated the very prayer that he formerly had spoken. Not that he put much or any importance upon the exact words to be employed. In three out of the six petitions of which the prayer is made up, there are variations in the words, not enough to make the slightest difference in the meaning, but sufficient to show that it was not simply by a repetition of the words that the prayer was truly offered. With rigorous exactness, this prayer might be said over and over again till it became a very vain repetition—all the vainer, perhaps, because of the very excellence of the form that was so abused. But over and over again—day by day—it might be repeated without any such abuse. All depends upon how you use it. Enter into its meaning—put your own soul and their own sense into the words—let it be the true and earnest desires of your heart that you thus breathe into the ear of the Eternal—and you need not fear how often you repeat it, or think that because you say the same words over again you sin. Our Lord himself, within the compass of an hour, repeated the same prayer thrice in the garden. Use it, however, as a mere form, with no other idea than that because it has been “authoritatively prescribed” it ought to be employed—a single such use of it is sin.

— 2. The order and proportion of the petitions in the Lord's prayer. It naturally divides itself into two equal parts; the one embracing the first three petitions, the other the three remaining ones—these parts palpably distinguished from each other by this, that in the former the petitions all have reference to God, in the latter to man. In the former the thoughts and desires of the petitioner are all engrossed with the name, the kingdom, the will of the great Being addressed; in the latter with his own wants, and sins, and trials. It would be carrying the idea of the Lord's prayer as a pattern, or model, to an illegitimate length, were we to say that because about one-half of the prayer is devoted to the first of these objects, and one half to the other, our prayers should be divided equally between them. Yet surely there is something to be learned from the precedence assigned here to the great things which concern the name, and kingdom, and will of our Heavenly Father, as well as from the space which these occupy in this prayer. You have but to reflect a moment



on the structure and proportion of parts in any of our ordinary prayers, whether in private or in public, and especially on the place and room given in them to petitions touching the coming of God's kingdom, and the doing of his will on earth as it is done in heaven, to be satisfied as to the contrast which in this respect they present to the model laid down by Christ himself. Our prayers, such as they are, with all their weaknesses and imperfections, will not, we are grateful to remember, be cast out because we yield to a strong natural bias, and cast into the foreground, and keep prominent throughout, those personal necessities of our spiritual nature which primarily urge us to the throne of grace. Our Heavenly Father not only knoweth what things we need before we ask them, he knoweth also what the things are, the need of which presses first and heaviest upon our hearts. Nor will he close his ear to any returning, repentant, hungering, and thirsting spirit, simply because these are pressed first and most urgently upon his regard. Is it not well, nevertheless, that we should be reminded, as the prayer dictated by our Saviour so emphatically does, that selfishness may and does creep into our very prayers, and that the perfect form of all right approach, all right address, to the Divinity, is that in which the place of supremacy which of right belongs to Him is duly and becomingly recognized. More especially should it be so in all prayers that go up from this sinful earth to those pure and holy heavens; for if it be true—as the whole body of the prayer prescribed by Jesus teaches us that it is—that we are living in a world where God's name is not hallowed as it ought to be, is often dishonored and profaned—in a world where God's kingdom of justice and holiness and love is not universally established, where another and quite opposite kingdom contests with it the empire of human souls—in a world where other wills than that of God are busily at work, not always consenting to or working under his, but resisting and opposing it;—then surely if the name, the kingdom, the will of our Father which is in heaven were as dear to us as they ought to be, first and above all things besides, we should desire that his name should be hallowed, his kingdom should come, his will should be done on earth as it is done in heaven. Let us then as often as we use this prayer receive with meekness the rebuke it casts upon that tendency and habit of our nature which leads us even in our prayers to put our own things before the things of our Heavenly Father; and let us urge our laggard spirits onward and upward from the sense and sight of our personal necessities, till, filled with adoration, and gratitude, and love, before we even make mention before him of a single individual want, we be ready with a true heart to say,

"Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

And while receiving the lesson clearly to be gathered from the place and space occupied by the first three petitions of our Lord's prayer, let its fourth petition, in its sequence and in its solitariness, and in its narrowness, proclaim to us the place even among our own things which earthly and bodily, as compared with spiritual provisions, possessions, enjoyments, ought to have. Is it without a meaning that we are taught to pray first, "Thy will be done," and then immediately thereafter, "Give us this day our daily bread"? The bread is to be asked that by it the life may be preserved, and the life is to be preserved that it may be consecrated to the doing of God's will. According to the tenor of the prayer and the connection of these two petitions, we are not at liberty to ask for the daily bread irrespective of the object to which the life and strength which it prolongs and imparts are to be devoted. It were a vain and hollow thing in any of us to pray that God's will be done, as in heaven, so on earth, if we do not desire and strive that it should be done, as by others, so also by ourselves. And it is as those who do thus desire, and are thus striving, that we are alone at all likely to proceed to say, "Give us this day our daily bread." A natural and moderate request, we may be ready to think, which all men will at once be prepared to present to God. Yet not so easy to present in the spirit in which Jesus would have us offer it. Not so easy to feel our continued and entire dependence on God for those very things that we are most tempted to think we have acquired by our own exertions, and secured to ourselves and our families by our own skill and prudence. Not so easy to pray for a competent portion of the things of this life, only that by the manner of our using and enjoying them the will of our Heavenly Father, his own gracious purpose in placing us where we are placed, and in giving us all that we possess, may be carried out. Not so easy to limit thus our desires and efforts in this direction, and to be satisfied with whatever the portion be that God pleases to bestow. Not so easy to renew this petition, day by day, as conscious that all which comes each day comes direct from the hand of God—comes to those who have no right or title to claim it as their own—who should ask and receive it continually as a gift. Not so easy to narrow the petition to the day, leaving to-morrow in God's hands. The simplest and easiest, though it seems at first, of all the six petitions, perhaps this one about our daily bread is one that we less frequently than any other present in the true spirit. It stands there in the very centre of the prayer—the only one bear-

ing upon our earthly condition—preceded and followed by others, with whose spirit it must or ought to be impregnated—from which it cannot be detached. Secular in its first aspect, in this connection how spiritual does it appear!

3. The fulness, condensedness, comprehensiveness, universality of the prayer. Of course it never was intended to confine within the limits of its few sentences the free spirit of prayer. The example of our Lord himself, of the apostles, of the Church in all ages, has taught us how full and varied are the utterances of the human heart, when it breathes itself out unrestrainedly unto God in prayer. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty—ample the freedom and wide the range that the Holy Spirit takes when he throws the human spirit into the attitude, and sustains it in the exercise of prayer—prompting those yearnings which cannot be uttered, those desires and affections which words multiplied to the uttermost fail adequately to express. In the past history, in the existing condition of every human soul, there is an infinitude of individual peculiarities. To forbid all references to these, all manifestations of these in prayer—to tie every one down at every season to pray as every one else—to allow no minute confession of particular transgressions, no recital of the circumstances in which they were committed, aggravations by which they were accompanied, no acknowledgment of special mercies, nor glad and grateful recounting how singularly appropriate and satisfying they had been—to cramp down within one dry and narrow mould all the complaints of sorrow, the moanings of penitence, the aspirations of desire, the beatings of gratitude, the breathings of love, the exultations of joy and hope, which fill the human heart, and which, in moments of filial trust, it would pour out into the ear of the Eternal—this were indeed to lay the axe at the root of all devotion. But while pleading for the very fullest liberty of prayer, let us not be insensible of the great benefit there is in ever and anon stepping out of that circle in which our own personal and particular sorrows and sins shape and intensify our prayers, into that upper and wider region in which, laying all those specialities for the time aside, we join the great company of the prayerful in all ages, in those few and simple, yet all-embracing petitions which they and we, and all that have gone before, and all that shall come after, unite in presenting to the Hearer and Answerer of prayer. And this is what we do in repeating the Lord's prayer. In it we have, stripped of all secondary or adventitious elements, the concentrated spirit and essence of prayer, a brief epitome of all the topics that prayer should embrace, a condensed expression of all those desires of the heart that should go up

to God in prayer. It is not a prayer this for any one period of life—for any one kind of character—for any one outward or inward condition of things—for any one country—for any one age. The child may lisp its simple sentences as soon as it knows how to pray; it comes with no less fitness from the wrinkled lips of age. The penitent in the first hour of his return to God, the struggler in the thick of the spiritual conflict, the believer in the highest soarings of his faith and love, may take up and use alike this prayer. The youngest, the oldest, the simplest, the wisest, the most sin-stained, the most saintly, can find nothing here unsuitable, unseasonable. It gathers up into one what they all can and should unite in saying as they bend in supplication before God. And from the day when first it was published on the mount, as our Lord's own directory for prayer, down through all these eighteen centuries, it has been the single golden link running through the ages that has bound together in one the whole vast company of the prayerful. Is there a single Christian now living upon earth—is there one among the multitude of the redeemed now praising God in heaven, who never prayed this prayer? I believe not one. It is not then, as isolated spirits, alone in our communion with God, it is as units in that unnumbered congregation of those who have bent, are bending, will bend, before the Throne, that we are to take up and to use this prayer. Not "my Father," but "our Father," is its key-note. Let it calm, and soothe, and elevate our spirits, as, leaving all that belongs to our own little separate circle of thoughts, and doubts, and fears, and hopes, and joys, behind, we rise to take our place in this vast company, and to mingle our prayers with theirs.

—And to what is it that the Lord's prayer owes especially the universality of its embrace—the omnipotence of its power? To the special character in which it presents God to all—the peculiar standing before him into which it invites all to enter. It is not to him as the great I AM, the Omnipotent, the Omnipresent Creator and Lord of all; it is not to him as dwelling in the light that no man can approach to—as clothed with all the attributes of majesty and power, and justice, and truth, and holiness, the Moral Governor of the Universe—that it invites us to come. No, but to him as our Father in heaven—a Father regarding us with infinite pity, loving us with an everlasting love, willing and waiting to bestow, able and ready to help us. It is to him who taught us this prayer that we owe the revelation of God to us as such a Father. More than that, it is to Christ we owe the establishment of that close and endearing connection of sonship to the Father—a connection which it only remains



for us to recognize, in order to enter into possession of all its privileges and joys. He who taught this prayer to his disciples, taught them, too, that no man can come unto the Father but through him. It were a great injustice unto him, if, because he has not named his own name in this prayer, we should forget that it is he who, by his Incarnation and Atonement, has so linked God and man, earth and heaven, together, that all those sentiments of filial trust and confidence which this prayer expresses, may and should be cherished by every individual member of our race. There is not a living man who may not use this prayer; for while it is true that no man cometh to the Father but through Christ, it is equally true—indeed the one truth is involved in the other—that all men, every man, may now so come; not waiting till he is sure that he is a child of God, has such faith in God, or gratitude to God, or willingness to serve God as he knows a child should cherish; not grounding his assurance of God's Fatherhood to him on his sonship to God—no, but welcoming the assurance given to him in and by Jesus Christ, that God is his Father, and using that very Fatherhood as his plea in his first and last, his every approach to him. To each and every one of the multitude upon the mountain-side of Galilee—to them just as they were—to them simply as sons of men, partakers of that humanity which he also shared, Jesus said, “God is your Father, treat him as your Father, commend your future to him, cast all your care upon him as such.” “Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.” Pray to him as such, then. “When thou prayest, pray to thy Father which seeth in secret.” After this manner pray ye—“Our Father which art in heaven.” And what Jesus said to the multitude on the mountain-side, he says to every child of Adam. Was it not indeed upon the existence and character of that very relationship of God to us and to all men that Jesus grounded the assurance he would have us cherish that our prayers shall not, cannot, go up in vain to heaven? For it is worthy of remark that on both occasions when this prayer was recited within the compass of the same discourse, shortly after he had repeated it—as if his thoughts were returning to the subject, and he wished to fix firm in the hearts of his disciples a faith in the efficacy of such prayer—he added, “I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh”—asks as I have told you he should, or for what I have told you he should—“every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it

shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? . . . If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!"

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### XIII.

#### — JESUS THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE.

CHRIST's first visit to Peræa, on his way up to the Feast of Dedication, was one of much locomotion and manifold activities. His second was dedicated rather to seclusion and repose. He retired to one chosen and hallowed spot—the place where John at first baptized—where he himself had first entered on his public ministry. Many resorted to him there, and many believed on him, but he did not go about as he had done before. Living in quiet with his disciples, a message came to him from Bethany. Some sore malady had seized upon Lazarus. His sisters early think of that kind friend, who they knew had cured so many others, and who surely would not be unwilling to succor them in their distress, and heal their brother; but they knew what had driven him lately from Jerusalem, and are unwilling to break in upon his retirement, or ask him to expose himself once more to the deadly hatred of his enemies. The disease runs on its course; Lazarus is on the very point of death. They can refrain no longer. They send off a messenger to Jesus. No urgent entreaty, however, is conveyed that he should hasten to their relief. No course is dictated. No desire even expressed. They think it is not needed. They remember all the kindnesses they had already experienced at his hands—how often he had made their house his home—what special marks of personal attachment and regard he had shown to themselves and to their brother. They deem it enough, therefore, to bid their messenger say, as soon as he met Jesus, "Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick." Jesus hears the message, and, without giving any other indication of his purpose, simply says, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." This is all the answer that he makes to a message so simply and delicately expressed; by that very simplicity and delicacy making all the stronger appeal to his sympathy. Nothing more being said by Jesus, nor anything further

apparently intended to be done, the messenger of the anxious sisters has to be satisfied with this. It seems to be so far satisfactory: "This sickness is not unto death." Jesus either knows that Lazarus is to recover, or he is to take some method of averting death—is to cure him; may have already done so by a word spoken—a volition formed at a distance. Treasuring up the sentence that he has heard uttered, and extracting from it such comfort as he can, the messenger returns to Bethany, and Jesus remains still two days in the place where he was. During these two days the incidents of the message and the answer fail not to be the subject of frequent converse among the disciples. They too might understand it to be the reason of their Master's saying and doing nothing further in the matter, that he was aware that the death the sisters dreaded was not to happen; or they too might think that his great power had already been exerted on behalf of one whom they knew he loved so much. So might they interpret the saying, "This sickness is not unto death;" but what can they make of those other words by which these had been followed up? How could it be said of this sickness of Lazarus, whether it left him naturally or was removed by a mysterious exercise of their Master's powers of healing, that it was to be "for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby"? This was saying a great deal more of the illness, however cured, than, so far as they can see, could be truly and fitly said of it. No further explanation, however, is made by Jesus, and they must wait the issue.

Two days afterwards Jesus calmly and resolutely, but somewhat abruptly and unexpectedly, says to them, "Let us go into Judea again." Though nothing was said or hinted about the object of the proposed visit, it would be very natural that the disciples should connect it with the message that had come from Bethany. But if it was to cure Lazarus that Christ was going, why had he not gone sooner? If the sickness that had been reported to him was not unto death, why go at all? why expose himself afresh to the malice of those who were evidently bent upon his destruction? "Master," they say to him, "the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again?" a remonstrance dictated by a sincere and laudable solicitude for their Master's safety, yet not without ingredients of ignorance and mistrust. "Are there not," said Jesus in reply, "twelve hours in the day?" "My time for working, for the doing the will of my Father which is in heaven, is it not a set time, its bounds as fixed as those of the natural day, having, like it, its twelve hours, that no man can take from and no man can add to? The hours of this my allotted period for finishing my earthly work must

run out their course; and while they are running, so long as I am upon the path marked out for me, walking by the light that comes from heaven, they cannot be shortened, go where I may; so long as I go under my Father's guidance, so long as I do what he desires, my life is safe. True, eleven hours of this my day may be already gone; I may have entered upon the last and twelfth, but till it end a shield of defence is round me that none can break through. Fear not for me then, till that twelfth hour strike I am as safe in Judea as here. And for your own comfort, know that what is true of me is true of every man who walks in God's own light—the light that the guiding Spirit gives to every man—kindled within his soul to direct him through all his earthly work. If any man walk in that light, he will not, cannot stumble, or fall, or perish; but if he walk in the night, go where he is not called, do what he is not bidden, then he stumbleth, because there is no light in him. He has turned the day into night, and the doom of the night-traveller hangs over him.'

He pauses to let these weighty truths sink deep into the disciples' hearts, then, turning to them, he says, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep." In their anxiety about their Master they had forgotten their absent friend whose love to Jesus had flowed over upon them, to whom they also were attached. How humanly, how tenderly does the phrase "our friend Lazarus" recall him to their thoughts! It would seem as if the ties that knit our Lord to the members of that family at Bethany had been formed for this as for other reasons, to show how open the heart of Jesus was, not merely to a universal love to all mankind, but to the more peculiar and specific affections of friendship. Among the twelve there was one whom he particularly loved; among the families he visited there was one to which he was particularly attached. Outside the circle of his immediate followers there was one whom he called his friend. Had he not already so distinctly said that his sickness was not unto death, the disciples, remembering that he had said of Jairus' daughter, "she is not dead, but sleepeth," might at first have caught the true meaning of their Master's words; but the idea of the death of Lazarus is so far from their thoughts, that they put the first interpretation on them that occurs, and without thinking on the worse than trifling end that they were thus attributing to Christ as the declared purpose of his proposed visit, they say, "Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well." Then said Jesus unto them plainly, "Lazarus is dead; and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him." Glad that he was not there! Yes, for it spared him the pain of looking at his friend in his



agony, at his sisters in their grief. Glad; for had he been there, could he have resisted the appeal of such a deathbed over which such mourners were bending? Could he, though meaning afterwards to raise him from the dead, have stood by and seen Lazarus depart? Glad that he was not there! Was he insensible, then, to all the pangs which that departure must have cost Martha and Mary—this one among the rest, that he was not there, and had not come when sent for? Was he insensible to the four days' weeping for the dead that his absence had entailed? Glad that he was not there! Had the mourning sisters heard the words, they might have fancied that his affection for their family had suffered a sudden chill. But there was no lack of sensibility to their sufferings; his sympathies with them had suffered no reverse. It was not that he loved or pitied them the less. It was that his sympathies, instead of resting on the single household of Bethany, were taking in the wider circle of his discipleship, and through them, or along with them, the whole family of our sinful, suffering humanity. It was with a calm, deliberate forethought that, on hearing of the sickness, he allowed two days to pass without any movement made to Bethany. He knew when Lazarus died—knew that he had died two days before he told his disciples of it, for the death, followed by speedy burial, must have occurred soon after the messenger left Bethany, in all likelihood before he reached the place where Jesus was; for if a day's journey carried the messenger (as it might have done to Bethabara), and another such day of travel carried Jesus and his disciples back again to Bethany, as Lazarus was four days in the grave when Jesus reached the spot, his decease must have taken place within a very short time after the original despatch of the message. Knowing when it happened, Jesus did not desire to be present at it—deliberately arranged it so that it should not be till four days after the interment that he should appear in Bethany. He had already in remote Galilee raised two from the dead—one soon after death, the other before burial. But now, in the immediate neighborhood of Jerusalem, in presence of a mixed company of friends and enemies, he has resolved, in raising Lazarus, to perform the great closing, crowning miracle of his ministry; and he will do it so that not the most captious or the most incredulous can question the reality either of the death or of the resurrection. It was to be our Lord's last public appearance among the Jews previous to his crucifixion. It was to be the last public miracle he was to be permitted to work. From the day that this great deed was done was to date the formal resolution of the Sanhedrim to put him to death. This close connection of the raising of Lazarus with

his own decease was clearly before his eye. His sayings and doings at Bethabara show with what deep interest he himself looked forward to the issue. If we cannot with certainty say that no miracle he ever wrought occupied beforehand so much of our Saviour's thoughts, we can say that no other miracle was predicted and prepared for as this one was.

"Lazarus is dead . . . . nevertheless let us go unto him." Had the disciples but remembered their Master's first words, to which the key had now been put into their hands, they might at once have gathered what the object of that journey was in which Jesus invited them to accompany him, and the thought of it might have banished other fancies and other fears. But slow to realize the glory of the coming and predicted miracle, or quick to connect it with the after-risk and danger, they hesitate. One there is among them as slow in faith as the slowest—fuller, perhaps, than any of them of mistrust—yet quick and fervid in his love, seeing nothing but death before Jesus if once he shows himself at Jerusalem—who says unto his fellow-disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him:" the expression of a gloomy and somewhat obstinate despondency, sinking into despair, yet at the same time of heroic and chivalrous attachment. Jesus says nothing to the utterer of this speech. He waits for other and after occasions to take Thomas into his hands, and turn his incredulity into warm and living faith.

The group journeys on to Bethany, and at last comes near the village. Some one has witnessed its approach, and goes with the tidings to where the mourning sisters and those who have to comfort them are sitting. It may have been into Martha's ear that the tidings are first whispered—Mary beside her, too overwhelmed with grief to hear. As soon as she hears that Jesus is coming, Martha rises and goes out to meet him. Mary, whether she hears or not, sees her sister rise and go, yet stays still in the house—the two sisters, the one in her eager movement, the other in her quiet rest, here as elsewhere showing forth the difference of their characters. Martha is soon in the Saviour's presence. The sight of Jesus fills her heart with strange and conflicting emotions. In his kind look she reads the same affectionate regard he had ever shown. Yet had he not delayed coming to them in their hour of greatest need? She will not reproach, for her confidence is still unbroken. Yet she cannot help feeling what looked liked forgetfulness or neglect. Above all such personal feelings the thought of her dead brother rises. She thinks of the strange words the messenger had reported. She knows not well what they could have meant, to what they could have point-

ed; but the hope still lingers in her heart, that now that he at last is here, the love and power of Jesus may find some way of manifesting themselves—perhaps even in recalling Lazarus from the dead. And in the tumult of these mixed feelings—in the agitation of regret and confidence, and grief and hope—she breaks out in the simple but pathetic utterance, “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died”—‘it is what Mary and I have been saying to ourselves and to one another, over and over again, ever since that sad and sorrowful hour. If only thou hadst been here! I do not blame you for not being here. I do not know what can have kept you from coming. I will not doubt or distrust your love—but if thou hadst been here my brother had not died—you could, you would have kept him from dying—you could, you would have raised him up, and given him back to us in health. Nay, “I know that even now whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.”’

The reply of Jesus seems almost to have been framed for the very purpose of checking the hope that was obviously rising in Martha’s breast. “Thy brother,” he says, “shall rise again”—words not indeed absolutely precluding the possibility of a present restoration of her brother to life, but naturally directing her thoughts away from such a restoration to the general resurrection of the dead. Such at least is their effect upon Martha, as is evident from her reply, “I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day”—a reply which, though it proved the firmness of her faith in the future and general resurrection of the dead, indicated something like disappointment at what Jesus said. But our Lord’s great object in entering into this conversation had now been gained. Instead of fostering the expectation of immediate relief, he had drawn Martha’s thoughts off for a time from the present, and fixed them upon the distant future of the invisible and eternal world. Having created thus the fit opportunity—here on the eve of performing the greatest of his miracles—here in converse with one of sincere but imperfect faith, plunged in grief, and seeking only the recovery of a lost brother, Jesus says, “I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die”—as if he had said, ‘Martha, Martha, thou wert troubled once when I was in your dwelling with the petty cares of your household, but now a heavier trouble has come upon your heart. You mourn a brother’s death, but would that even now I could raise your thoughts above the consideration of the life, the death, the resurrection of the perishable body, to the infinitely more momentous one of the life and the death of the indwelling, the im-

mortal soul! You are looking to me with a lingering hope that I might find some way to assuage your present grief by giving back to you the brother that lies buried. You believe so far in me as to have the confidence that whatever I asked of God, God would give it me. Would that I could get you and all to look to me in another and far higher character than the assuager of human sorrow, the bringer of a present relief; that I could fix your faith upon me as the Prince of life, the author, the bestower, the originator, the supporter, the maturer of that eternal life within the soul over which death hath so little dominion—that whosoever once hath this life begun, in dying still lives, and in living can never die.’ For let us notice, as helping us to a true comprehension of these wonderful words of our Redeemer, that immediately after their utterance, he addressed to Martha the pointed question, “Believest thou this?” It was not unusual for our Lord to ask some profession of faith in his power to help from those on whom or for whom that power was about to be exerted. He did not need to ask any such profession from Martha. She had already declared her full assurance that he had the power of Deity at command. The very manner in which the question was put to Martha, “Believest thou this?” plainly intimates that some weighty truth lay wrapped up in the words just uttered beyond any to which she had already assented. Had there been nothing in what Christ now said beyond what Martha had previously believed—to which he had already testified—such an interrogation would have been without a meaning. It cannot be a mere proclamation of the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body, and of Christ’s connection with them, either as their human announcer or their Divine author, that is here made. No such interpretation would explain or justify the language here employed. The primary and general assertion, “I am the resurrection and the life,” gets its only true significance assigned to it by the two explanatory statements with which it was followed up. “I am the life,” said Jesus, not in any general sense as being the great originator and sustainer of the soul’s existence, but in this peculiar and specific sense, that “whosoever liveth and believeth on me”—or rather, liveth by believing on me—“shall never die.” And “I am the resurrection” in this sense, that “whosoever believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.”

Such language connects, in some peculiar way, the life and resurrection that Jesus is now speaking of with believing on him; it at least implies that he has some other and closer connection with the life and the resurrection of men who believe than he has with those of men who believe not. Jesus, in fact, is here, in these mem-



orable words, only proclaiming to Martha, and through her to the world of sinners he came to save, what the great end of his mission is, and how it is that that end is accomplished. Sin entered into this world, and death—not the dissolution of the body, but spiritual death—this death by sin. “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt die.” And the death came with the first transgression. The pulse of the true spiritual life, of life in God and to God, ceased its beatings. Death reigned in all its coldness; the warmth of a pervading love to God had gone, and the chill of a pervading fear seized upon the soul. Death reigned in all its silence, for the voice of ceaseless prayer and praise was hushed. It rained in all its torpid inactivity, for no longer was there a continued putting forth of the entire energies of the spirit in the service of its Maker. And the same death that came upon the first transgressor has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. And if to be under condemnation be death, if to be carnally-minded be death; if amid all the variety of motives by which we naturally are influenced, there be, but at lengthened intervals, a weak and partial regard to that Great Being whom no creature can altogether banish from his thoughts, then surely the Scriptures err not in the representation that it was into a world of the dead that Jesus came. He came to be the quickener of the dead; having life in himself, to give of this life to all who came to him for it. “The life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.” “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.” “And we know that the Son of God is come. This is the true God and eternal life.” “And this is the record that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

Such are the testimonies borne by a single apostle in one short epistle (1st Epistle of John). More striking than any other words upon this subject are those of our Lord himself. Take up the gospel of St John, the special record of those discourses of our Lord in which he most fully unfolded himself, telling who he was, and what he came to this earth to do, and you will not find one of them in which the central idea of life coming to the dead through him is not presented. Thus, in the conversation with Nicodemus on the occasion of his first Passover, you hear him say: “As Moses lifted up the

serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up : that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:14-16. Thus, also, in his conversation with the woman of Samaria : "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living" (life-giving) "water. Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." John 4:10-14. Thus, also, in his next discourse at Jerusalem, on the occasion of his second Passover : "For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." John 5:21, 24, 40. Thus, also, in the great discourse delivered after the feeding of the five thousand : "This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. I am that bread of life. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." John 6:39, 40, 48, 50, 51, 53, 56. Thus, also, at the Feast of Tabernacles : "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." John 8:12, 51. Thus, also, at the Feast of Dedication : "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." John 10:27, 28. And so also on the eve of his last and greatest miracle : "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Is there nothing striking in it that, from first to last, running through all these discourses of our Saviour—to be found in every one of them without a single

exception—this should be held out to us by our Lord himself as the great end and object of his life and death—that we, who were all dead in trespasses and sins, alienated from the life of God, should find for these dead souls of ours a higher and everlasting life in him?

The life of the soul lies, first, in the enjoyment of God's favor—in the light of his reconciled countenance shining upon it, in the everlasting arms of his love and power embracing it. The great obstacle to our entrance upon this life is conscious guilt, the sense of having forfeited the favor, incurred the wrath of God. This obstacle Christ has taken out of the way by dying for us, by bearing our sins in his own body on the tree. There is redemption for us through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins. Not that the cross is a talisman which works with a hidden, mystic, unknown, unfelt power—not that the blood of the great sacrifice is one that cleanseth past guilt away, leaving the old corruption untouched and unsubdued. Jesus is the life in a farther and far higher sense than the opener of a free way of access to God through the rent veil of his flesh. He is the perennial source of that new life within, which consists in communion with God, likeness to God, in gratitude, in love, in peace, and joy, and hope—in trusting, serving, submitting, enduring. This life hangs ever and wholly upon him; all good and gracious affections, every pure and holy impulse, the desire and ability to be, to do, to suffer—coming to us from him to whose light we bring our darkness, to whose strength we bring our weakness, to whose sympathy our sorrow, to whose fulness our emptiness. Our natural life, derived originally from another, is for a season dependent on its source, but that dependence weakens and at last expires. The infant hangs helplessly upon its mother at the first. But the infant grows into the child, the child into the man—the two lives separate. Not such our spiritual life. Coming to us at first from Christ, it comes equally and entirely from him ever afterwards. It grows, but never away from him. It gets firmer, more matured; but its greater firmness and maturity it owes to closer contact with him—simpler and more entire dependence on him, deeper and holier love to him. It is as the branch is in the vine, having no life when parted from it; and as a child is in its parent, that believers are in Christ. There is but one relationship, of Son to Father—one wholly unique—which fitly represents this union, which was employed by Christ himself to do so. "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." It is indeed but the infancy of that

life which lies in such oneness with the Son and the Father, that is to be witnessed here on earth. Yet within that feeble infancy are the germinating seeds of an endless, an ever-progressive, an indestructible existence, raised by its very nature above the dominion of death; bound by ties indissoluble to him who was dead and is alive again, and liveth for evermore; an existence destined to run on its everlasting course, getting ever nearer and nearer, growing ever liker and liker to him from whom it flows.

Amid the death-like torpor which hath fallen upon us, stripping us of the desire and power to live wholly in God and wholly for God, who would not wish to feel the quickening touch of the great life-giver, Jesus Christ—to be raised to newness of life in him—to have our life bound up with his for ever—hid with him in God? This—nothing less than this, nothing lower than this—is set before us. Who would not wish to see and feel it realized in his present, his future, his eternal existence? Then, let us cleave to Christ, resolved in him to live, desiring in him to die, that with him we may be raised at last, at the resurrection, on the great day, to those heavenly places where, free from all weakness, vicissitude, corruption, and decay, this life shall be expanded and matured throughout the bright ages of an unshadowed eternity.

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#### XIV.

#### THE RAISING OF LAZARUS.\*

It is not likely that Martha understood in its full meaning what Christ had said about his being the Resurrection and the Life. So far, however, as she did comprehend, she believed; and so when Jesus said to her, "Believest thou this?"—understanding that he had spoken about himself, and wished from her some expression of her faith—she said to him, "Yea, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." With crude ideas of the character and offices they attributed to him, many were ready to call Jesus the Christ, to believe that he was the Messiah spoken of by the prophets. Martha's confession went much farther than this: she believed him to be also the Son of God, to be that for claiming to be which the Jews had been ready to stone him, as one making himself equal with God. It may have been, regarding him too much



as a mere man having power with God, that she had previously said, "But I know that even now whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee;" but now that her thoughts are concentrated upon it, she tells out all the faith that is in her, and in so doing ranks herself beside Peter and the very few who at that time could have joined in the confession, "I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Had Mary and Lazarus not been in his thoughts Jesus might have pronounced over Martha the same benediction that he did over Peter, and said to her, "Blessed art thou, Martha, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." As it is, he simply accepts the good confession, and bids Martha go and call her sister.

Mary had not heard at first of the Lord's coming, or, if she had, was too absorbed in her sorrow to heed it. But now when Martha whispers in her ear, "The Master is come and calleth for thee," she rises and hastens out to where Jesus is, outside the village. No one had followed Martha when she went out there. But there was such an unusual quickness, such a fresh and eager excitement in this movement of Mary, that those around her ran with her and followed, saying, "She goeth unto the grave to weep there." Thus did she draw along with her the large company that was to witness the great miracle.

Once again in the Master's presence, Mary is overwhelmed with emotion. She falls weeping at his feet; has nothing to say as she looks up at him through her tears but what Martha had said before: "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Her grief checks all further utterance. Nor has Jesus any thing to say. Mary is weeping at his feet, Martha is weeping at his side, the Jews are weeping all around. This is what death had done, desolating a once happy home, rending with such bitter grief the two sisters' hearts, melting into kindred sorrow the hearts of friends and neighbors. The calm that had its natural home in the breast of the Redeemer is broken up: he grieves in spirit and is troubled. Too heavy in heart himself, too troubled in spirit, as he stands with hearts breaking and tears falling all around him, to have any words of counsel or comfort for Mary such as he addressed to Martha, he can only say, "Where have ye laid him?" They say to him, "Lord, come and see." He can restrain no longer. He wept.

What shall we think or say of these tears of Jesus? There were some among those who saw him shed them, who, looking at them in

their first and simplest aspect—as tears shed over the grave of a departed friend—said one to another, “Behold how he loved him!” There were others not sharing so much in the sisters’ grief, who were at leisure to say, “Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?” “If he could have saved him, why did he not do it? He may weep now himself: had it not been better that he had saved these two poor sisters from weeping?” We take our station beside these men. With the first we say, Behold how he pities! See in the tears he sheds what a singular sympathy with human sorrow there is within his heart—a sympathy deeper and purer than we have ever elsewhere seen expressed. To weep with others or for others is no unusual thing, and carries with it no evidence of extraordinary tenderness of spirit. It is what at some time or other of their lives all men have done. But there is a peculiarity in the tears of Jesus that separates them from all others—that gives them a new meaning and a new power. For where is Jesus when he weeps? a few paces from the tomb of Lazarus; and what is he about immediately to do? to raise the dead man from the grave, and give him back to his sisters. Only imagine that, gifted with such a power, you had gone on such an errand, and stood on the very edge of its execution, would not your whole soul be occupied with the great thing you were about to do, the great joy you were about to cause? You might see the sisters of the dead one weeping, but, knowing how very soon you were about to turn their grief into gladness, the sight would only hasten you forward on your way. But though knowing what a perfect balm he was so soon to lay upon all the sorrow, Jesus shows himself so sensitive to the simple touch of grief, that even in such peculiar circumstances he cannot see others weeping without weeping along with them. How exquisitely tender the sympathy manifested in the tears that in such peculiar circumstances were shed!

Again we take our station beside the onlookers, and to the second set of speakers we would say—he could have caused that this man had not died. But his are no false tears, though shed over a calamity he could have prevented. He allowed Lazarus to die, he allowed his sisters to suffer all this woe, not that he loved them less, but because he knew that for him, for them, for others, for us all, higher ends were in this way gained than could have been accomplished by his cutting the illness short, and going from Bethabara to cure. Little did the weeping sisters know what a place in the annals of redemption the death and resurrection of their brother was to occupy. How earnestly in the course of the illness did they pray

for his recovery! How eagerly did they despatch their messenger to Jesus! A single beam of light fell on the darkness when the messenger brought back as answer the words he had heard Jesus utter—"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." What other meaning could they put upon the words, but that either their brother was to recover, or Jesus was to interfere and heal him? Their brother died, and all the more bitterly because of their disappointment did they bemoan his loss. But what thought they when they got him back again—what thought they when they heard of Christ's own death and resurrection—what thought they when they came to know, as they had never known before, that Jesus was indeed the abolisher of death, the bringer of life and immortality to light? Would they then have wished that their brother had not died—that they had been saved their tears, but lost the hallowed resurrection-birth of their brother to his Lord, lost to memory the chiefest treasure that time gave to carry with them into eternity? •

Groaning again in spirit, Jesus came to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone covered the niche within which the body of the dead was lying. Jesus said, "Take ye away the stone." The doing so would at once expose the dead, and let loose the foul effluvium of the advanced decomposition. The careful Martha, whose active spirit ever busied itself with the outward and tangible side of things, at once perceives this, and hastens to interpose a check. Gently, but chidingly, the Lord said unto her, "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" 'Was it not told thee in the words brought back by thy messenger that this sickness was to be for the glory of God—a glory waiting yet to be revealed? Have I not been trying to awaken thy faith in myself, as the resurrection and the life? Why think, then, of the existing state of thy brother's body? Why not let faith anticipate the future, and put all such lower thoughts and cares away?' The rebuke was gently given; but given at such a time, and in such presence, it must have fallen heavily upon poor Martha's heart.

And now the order is obeyed. Taking a hasty glance within, the removers of the stone withdraw. Jesus stands before the open sepulchre. But all is not ready yet. There is to be a slowness, a solemnity in every step that shall wind up every spirit to the topmost point of expectation. Jesus lifts his eyes to heaven and prays, not to ask God to work the miracle, or give him power to do so. So might Moses, or Elijah, or any other of the great miracle-workers of earlier times have done, proclaiming thereby in whose name it was and by

whose power they wrought. Jesus never did so. He stands alone in this respect. All that he did was done indeed in conjunction with the Father. He was careful to declare that the Son did nothing of himself, nothing independently. It was in faith, with prayer, that all his mighty works were wrought; but the faith was as peculiar as the prayer—both such as he alone could cherish and present. Ordinarily the faith was hidden in his heart, the prayer was in secret, unuttered and unheard. But now he would have it known how close was the union between him and the Father. He would turn the approaching miracle into an open and incontrovertible evidence that he was the Sent of the Father, the Son of God. And so, in words of thanksgiving rather than of petition, he says, “Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me”—the silent prayer had already been heard and answered—“And I knew that thou hearest me always,” “that thy hearing is not peculiar to this case, for as I am always praying, so thou art always answering”—“but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.” In no more solemn manner could the fact of his mission from the Father, and of the full consent and continued coöperation of the Father with him in all he said and did, be suspended upon the issue of the words that next come from his lips: “And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.” The hour has come for the dead to hear and live. At once, and at that summons, the body lives, starts into life again, not as it had died, the life injected into a worn and haggard frame. It gets back in a moment all its healthful vigor. At once, too, and at that summons, from a dreamless sleep that left it nothing to tell about the four days’ interval, or from a region the secrets of which it was not permitted to disclose, the spirit returns to its former habitation. Lazarus rises and stands erect. But he is bound hand and foot, a napkin is over his face and across his eyes. So bound, as good as blind, he could take but a few timid shuffling steps in advance. “Loose him,” said Jesus, “and let him go.” They do it. He can see now all around. He can go where he pleases. Shall we doubt that the first use he makes of sight and liberty is to go and cast himself at the Redeemer’s feet?

“Take ye away the stone,” “Loose him, and let him go.” Christ could easily by the word of his great power have removed the stone, untied the bandages. But he does not do so. There is to be no idle expenditure of the Divine energy. What human hands are fit for, human hands must do. The earthly and the heavenly, as in all Christ’s workings, blend harmoniously together. So is it still in that spiritual world in which he still is working the wonders of his



grace, raising dead souls to life, and nourishing the life that is so begotten.

It is not for us to quicken the spiritually dead. No human voice has power to pierce the closed ear, to reach the dull, cold heart. The voice of Jesus can alone do that. But there are stones of obstruction which keep that voice from being heard. These we can remove. The ignorant can be taught, the name of Jesus be made known, the glad tidings of salvation published abroad. And when at the divine call the new life has entered into the soul, by how many bonds and ligaments, prejudices of the understanding, old holds of the affections, old habits of the life, is it hampered and hindered! These, as cramping our own or others' higher life, we may help to untie and fling away.

But the crowning lesson of the great miracle is the mingled exhibition that it makes of the humanity and divinity of our Lord. Nowhere, at no time in all his life, did he appear more perfectly human, show himself more openly or fully to be one with us, our true and tender elder brother, than when he burst into tears before the grave of Lazarus. Nowhere, at no time, did he appear more divine than when with the loud voice he cried, "Lazarus, come forth," and at the voice the dead arose and came forth. And it is just because there meet in him the richness and the tenderness of an altogether human pity and the fulness of a divine power, that he so exactly and so completely satisfies the deepest inward cravings of the human heart. In our sins, in our sorrows, in our weaknesses, in our doubts, in our fears, we need sympathy of others who have passed through the same experience. We crave it. When we get it we bless the giver, for in truth it does more than all things else. But there are many barriers in the way of our obtaining it, and there are many limits which confine it when it is obtained. Many do not know us. They are so differently constituted, that what troubles us does not trouble them. They look upon all our inward struggles and vexations as needless and self-imposed, so that just in proportion to the speciality of our trial is the narrowness of the circle from which we can look for any true sympathy. But even were we to find the one in all the earth by nature most qualified to enter into our feelings, how many are the chances that we should find his sympathy preoccupied, to the full engaged, without time or without patience to make himself so master of all the circumstances of our lot, and all the windings of our thoughts and our affections, as to enable him to feel with us and for us, as he even might have done! But that which we may search the world for without finding is ours in Jesus Christ. All impediments

removed, all limitations lifted off—how true, how tender, how constant, how abiding is his brotherly sympathy—the sympathy of one who knows our frame, who remembers we are dust, of one who knows all about, all within us, and who is touched with a fellow-feeling of our infirmities, “having himself been tempted in all things like as we are.” It is not simply the pity of God, with all its fulness and tenderness: that had not come so close to us, taken such a hold of us; it is the sympathy of a brother-man that Jesus extends to us, free from all the restrictions to which such sympathy is ordinarily subjected.

But we need more than that sympathy; we need succor. Besides the heart tender enough to pity, we need the hand strong enough to help, to save us. We not only want one to be with us and feel with us in our hours of simple sorrow, we want one to be with us and aid us in our hours of temptation and conflict, weakness and defeat—one not only to be ever at our side at all times and seasons of this our earthly pilgrimage, but to be near us then, to uphold us then, when flesh and heart shall faint and fail; to be the strength of our hearts then, and afterwards our portion for ever. In all the universe there is but one such. Therefore to him, our own loving, compassionate, Almighty Saviour, let us cling, that softly in the bosom of his gentle pity we may repose, and safely, by his everlasting arms, may for ever be sustained.

Let us now resume the narrative. The raising of Lazarus, was too conspicuous a miracle, it had been wrought too near the city, had been seen by too many witnesses, and had produced too palpable results, not to attract the immediate and fixed attention of the Jewish rulers. Within a few hours after its performance Jerusalem would be filled with the report of its performance. A meeting of the Sanhedrim was immediately summoned, and sat in council as to what should be done. No doubt was raised as to the reality of this or any of the other miracles which Christ had wrought. They had been done too openly to admit of that. But now, when many even of the Jews of Jerusalem were believing in him, some stringent measures must be taken to check this rising, swelling tide, or who could tell to what it may carry them? There were divisions, however, in the council. It was constituted of Pharisees and Sadducees, who had been looking at Jesus all through with very different eyes. The Pharisees, from the first, had hated him. He had made so little of all their boasted righteousness, had exalted goodness and holiness of heart and life so far above all ritualistic regularity, had simplified religion so, and encouraged men, however sinful, to go directly to

God as their merciful Father, setting aside the pretensions of the priesthood, and treating as things of little worth the labored theology and learning of the schools, he had been so unsparing besides in exposing the avarice, the ambition, the sensuality that cloaked themselves in the garb of a precise and exclusive and fastidious religionism, that they early felt that their quarrel with him was not to be settled otherwise than by his death. Very early, on the occasion of his second visit to Jerusalem, they had sought to slay him, at first nominally as a Sabbath-breaker, then afterwards, and still more, as a blasphemer.\* In Galilee—to which he had retired to put himself out of the reach of the Pharisees of the capital—their hostility pursued him, till we read of the Pharisees and the Herodians then taking counsel together “how they might destroy him.”† Once and again, at the Feast of Tabernacles, and at the Feast of Dedication, stones had been taken up to stone him to death, officers had been sent to arrest him, and the resolution taken and announced, that that if any man should confess that he was the Christ, he should be excommunicated. But as yet no formal determination of the Sanhedrim had been made that he should be put to death. The reason for this delay, for suffering Christ to go at large even for so long a time as he did, was in all likelihood the dominance in the Sanhedrim of the Sadducean element. The Sadducees had their own grounds for disliking the person, the character, the teaching, the pretensions of Jesus, but they were not so vehement or so virulent in their persecution of him. Caring less about religious dogmas and observances than the rival sect, they might have been readier to tolerate him as an excited enthusiast; but now they also got frightened, for they were the great supporters of the Roman power, and the great fearers of popular revolt. And so when this meeting of the Great Council was called in haste, Pharisees and Sadducees found common ground in saying to one another, “What do we? for this man does many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.” Neither party believed that there was any chance of Jesus making a successful revolt, and achieving by that success a liberation from the Roman yoke, as it then lay upon them. The Pharisees, the secret enemies of the foreigner, saw nothing in Jesus of such a warlike leader as the nation longed for and required. The Sadducees, dreading some outbreak, but utterly faithless as to any good issue coming out of it, saw nothing before them as the result of such a movement but the loss of such power as they were still permitted to exercise.

\* John 5 : 16-18.      † Mark 3 : 6.

And so both combined against the Lord. But there was some loose talking, some doubts were expressed by men like Nicodemus, or some feeblenesses spoken of, till the high priest himself arose—Caiaphas, the son-in-law of Annas, connected thus with that family in which the Jewish pontificate remained for fifty years—four of the sons, as well as the son-in-law of Annas, having, with some interruptions, enjoyed this dignity. All through this period, embracing the whole of Christ's life from early childhood, Annas, the head of this favored family, even when himself out of office, retained much of its power, being consulted on all occasions of importance, and acting as the president of the Sanhedrim. Hence it is that in the closing scenes of our Lord's history Annas and Caiaphas appear as acting conjunctly, each spoken of as high priest. Caiaphas, like the rest of his family, like all the aristocracy of the temple, was a Sadducee; and the spirit both of the family and the sect was that of haughty pride and a bold and reckless cruelty. Caiaphas cut the deliberations short by saying impetuously and authoritatively to his colleagues, "Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." One life, the life of this Galilean, what is it worth? What matters it, whether he be innocent or guilty, according to this or that man's estimate of guilt or innocence; it stands in the way of the national welfare. Better one man perish than that a whole nation be involved in danger, it may be in ruin. The false, the hollow, the unjust plea, upon which the life of many a good and innocent man, guilty of nothing but speaking the plain and honest truth, has been sacrificed, had all the sound, as coming from the lips of the high priest, of a wise policy, a consultation for the nation's good. Pleased with themselves as such good patriots, and covering with this disguise all the other grounds and reasons for the resolution, it was determined that Jesus should be put to death. It remained only to see how most speedily and most safely it could be accomplished.

Unwittingly, in what he said Caiaphas had uttered a prophecy, had announced a great and central truth of the Christian faith. He had given to the death determined on too limited a range, as if it had been for that nation of the Jews alone that Jesus was to die. But the Evangelist takes up, expounds, and expands his words as carrying with them the broad significance that not for that nation only was he to die, but that by his death he "should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." Strange ordering of Providence, that here at the beginning and there at the close of our Lord's passion—here in the Sanhedrim, there upon the



cross—here from the Jewish high priest, there from the Roman governor—words should come by which the unconscious utterers conspired in proclaiming the priestly and the kingly authority and office of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

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## XV.

THE LAST JOURNEY THROUGH PERÆA (EAST OF THE JORDAN): THE TEN LEpers—THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM—THE QUESTION OF DIVORCE—LITTLE CHILDREN BROUGHT TO HIM—THE YOUNG RULER.\*

CHRIST's stay at Bethany on the occasion of his raising Lazarus from the dead must have been a very short one. The impression and effect of the great miracle was so immediate and so great that no time was lost by the rulers in calling together the council and coming to their decision to put Jesus to death. Hearing of this, no time on his part would be lost in putting himself, now only for a short time, beyond their reach. He retired in the first instance to a part of the country near the northern extremity of the wilderness of Judea, into a city called Ephraim, identified by many with the modern town of Taiyibeh, which lies a few miles northeast of Bethel. After some days of rest in this secluded spot, spent we know not how, the Pass-over drew on, and Jesus arose to go up to it. He took a circuitous course, passing eastward along the border-line between Galilee and Samaria, which lay not more than half a day's journey from Ephraim, descending into the valley of the Jordan, crossing the river, entering once more into Peræa, travelling through it southward to Jericho. It was during this, the last of all his earthly journeys, that as he entered into a certain village there met him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off, as the law required; but not wishing to let him pass without a trial made of his grace and power, lifted up their voices, and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." "Go show yourselves unto the priests," was all that Jesus said. He gave this order, and passed on. The first thing that the leper who knew or believed that the leprosy had departed from him had to do, was to submit himself for inspection to the priesthood, that his cure might be authenticated, and he be formally relieved from the restraints under which he had been laid. And this is what these ten men are

\* Luke 17:11-37, 18:15-27; Matt. 19:1-26; Mark 10:1-27.

bidden now to do, while as yet no sign of the removal of the disease appears. Whether they all had a firm faith from the first that they would be cured we may well doubt. Perhaps there was but one among them who had such faith. They all, however, obey the order that had been given; it was at least worth trying whether anything could come out of it, and as they went they were all cleansed. The moment that the cure was visible, one of them, who was a Samaritan, ere he went forward to the priest, went back to Jesus, glorifying God with a loud voice, and falling at Christ's feet to give him thanks. The other nine went on, had their healing in due course authenticated, returned to their families and friends, but inquired not for their deliverer, nor sought him out to thank him. The contrast was one that Christ himself thought fit to notice. "Were there not ten cleansed," he said, "but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole." But now once more the Pharisees betake themselves to their congenial work, asking him when the kingdom of God should come. He corrects their errors, gives them solemn warnings as to a coming of the Son of Man, in whose issues the men of that generation should be very disastrously involved, adding the two parables of the Unjust Judge and of the Pharisee and the Publican. Once more, however, these inveterate enemies return to the assault. At an earlier period they had sought in his own conduct, or in that of his disciples, to find ground of accusation. Baffled in this, they try now a more insidious method, to which we find them having frequent recourse towards the close of our Lord's ministry. They demand his opinion upon the vexed question of divorce. The two great schools of their rabbis differed in their interpretation of the law of Moses upon this point. Which side would Jesus take? Decide as he may, it would embroil him in the quarrel. To their surprise he shifted the ground of the whole question from the only one upon which they rested it, the authority of Moses; told them in effect that they were wrong in thinking that because Moses, or God through Moses, tolerated certain practices, that therefore these practices were absolutely right and universally and throughout all time to be observed—furnishing thereby a key to the Divine legislation for the Israelites, which we have been somewhat slow to use as widely as we should; told them that it was because of the hardness of their hearts, to prevent greater mischiefs that would have followed a purer and stricter enactment, that the Israelites had been permitted to put away their wives, (divorce allowed thus, as polygamy had been,) but that from the

beginning it had not been so, nor should it be so under the new economy that he was ushering in, in which, save in a single case, the marriage tie was indissoluble.

In happy contrast with all such insidious attempts to entangle him in his talk was the next incident of his last journey through Peræa. They brought little children—infants—to him. It is not said precisely who brought them, but can we doubt that it was the mothers of the children? They brought their little ones to Jesus that he might touch them, put his hands upon them, pray for and bless them. Some tinge of superstition there may have been in this, some idea of a mystic benefit to be conveyed even to infancy by the touch and the blessing of Jesus. But who will not be ready to forgive the mothers here, though this were true, as we think of the fond regard and deep reverence they cherished towards him? They see him passing through their borders. They hear it is a farewell visit he is paying. These little babes of theirs shall never live to see and know how good, how kind, how holy a one he is; but it would be something to tell them of when they grew up, something that they might be the better of all their lives afterwards, if he would but touch them and pray over them. And so they come, bringing their infants in their arms, first telling the disciples what they want. To them it seems a needless if not impertinent intrusion upon their Master's graver labors. What good can children so young as these get from the Great Teacher? Why foist them upon the notice and care of one who has so much weightier things in hand? Without consulting their Master, they rebuke the bringers of the children, and would have turned them at once away. Jesus saw it, and he was "much displeased." There was more than rudeness and discourtesy in the conduct of his disciples. There was ignorance, there was unbelief; it was a dealing with infants as if they had no part or share as such in his kingdom. The occasion was a happy one—perhaps the only one that occurred—for exposing their ignorance, rebuking their unbelief, and so, after looking with displeasure at his disciples, Jesus said to them, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." We take the last words here in the simplest and most obvious sense, as implying that the kingdom of heaven belongs to infants, is in a measure made up of them. It is quite true that immediately after having said this about the infants Jesus had a cognate word to say to the adults around him. He had to tell them that "whosoever should not receive the kingdom of God as a little child should not enter therein." But that was not said barely and alone as an explanation of his





CHRIST BLESSING LITTLE CHILDREN



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former speech—was not said to take all meaning out of that speech as having any reference to the little children that were then actually in his presence. It might be very true, and a very needful thing for us to know, that we must be in some sense like to them before we can enter into the kingdom; but that did not imply that they must become like to us ere they can enter it. If all that Jesus meant had been that of suchlike, that is, of those who, in some particular, resemble little children, is the kingdom of heaven, we can see much less appropriateness in the rebuke of the disciples, and in the action of the Lord which followed immediately upon his use of the expression—his taking the little children up into his arms and blessing them. We accept, then, the expression as implying not simply that of suchlike, but of them is the kingdom of heaven. It may be thought that a shade of uncertainty still hangs over it. John Newton uses the cautious language, “I think it at least highly probable that in those words our Lord does not only, if at all, here intimate the necessity of our becoming as little children in simplicity, as a qualification without which (as he expressly declares in other places) we cannot enter into his kingdom, but informs us of a fact, that the number of infants who are effectually redeemed to God by his blood, so greatly exceeds the aggregate of adult believers, that his kingdom may be said to consist of little children.” It is not necessary, however, while adopting generally the interpretation which Newton thought so highly probable, to press it so far, or to infer that the kingdom is said to be of such because they constitute the majority of its members; enough to receive the saying as carrying with it the consoling truth, that to infants as such the kingdom of heaven belongeth, so that if in infancy they die, into that kingdom they enter. We would be most unwilling to regard this gracious utterance of our Lord, and the gracious act by which it was followed up, as implying anything less than this.

It is not, however, upon any single saying of our Lord that we ground our belief that those who die in infancy are saved; it is upon the whole genius, spirit, and object of the great redemption. There is indeed a mystery in the death of infants. No sadder nor more mysterious sight upon this earth than to see a little unconscious babe struggling through the agonies of dissolution, bending upon us those strange imploring looks which we long to interpret but cannot, which tell only of a suffering we cannot assuage, convey to us petitions for help to which we can give no reply. But great as the mystery is which wraps itself around the death, still greater would be that attending the resurrection of infants if any of them perish. Tho

resurrection is to bring to all an accession of weal or woe. In that resurrection infants are to share. Can we believe that, without an opportunity given of personally receiving or rejecting Christ, they shall be subjected to a greater woe than would have been theirs had there been no Redeemer and no redemption? Then to them his coming into the world had been an unmitigated evil. Who can believe it to be so? Who will not rather believe, that even as without sharing in the personal transgression of the first natural head of our race, without sinning after the similitude of Adam's transgression, they became involved in death; even so, though not believing here—the chance not given them—they will share in the benefit of that life which the second, the spiritual Head of our race, has brought in and dispenses? “Your little ones,” said the Lord to ancient Israel, speaking of the entrance into the earthly land of promise—“Your little ones which ye said should be a prey, and your children which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither.” And of that better land into which for us Jesus as the forerunner has entered, shall we not believe that our little ones, who died before they had any knowledge between good and evil, shall go in thither, go to swell the number of the redeemed, go to raise it to a vast majority of the entire race, mitigating more than we can well reckon the great mystery of the existence here of so much sin, and suffering, and death?

Setting forth afresh, and now in all likelihood about to pass out of that region, there met him one who came running in all eagerness, as anxious not to lose the opportunity, and who kneeled to him with great reverence as having the most profound respect for him as a righteous man, and who said, “Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?” Jesus might at once and without any preliminary conversation have laid on him the injunction that he did at the last, and this might equally have served the final end that the Lord had in view; but then we should have been left in ignorance as to what kind of man he was, and how it was that the injunction was at once so needful and so appropriate. It is by help of the preparatory treatment that we are enabled to see farther than we should otherwise have done into the character of this petitioner. He was young, he was wealthy, he was a ruler of the Jews. Better than this, he was amiable, he was virtuous, had made it from the first a high object of ambition to be just and to be generous, to use the advantages of his position to win in a right way the favor of his fellow-men. But notwithstanding, after all the successful attempts of his past life, there was a restlessness, a dissatisfaction in his heart.

He had not reached the goal. He heard Jesus speak of eternal life, something evidently far higher than anything he had yet attained, and he wondered how it was to be secured. Nothing doubting but that it must be along the same track that he had hitherto been pursuing, but by some extra work of extraordinary merit, he comes to Jesus with the question, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?" Jesus saw at once that he was putting all upon moral goodness, some higher virtue to be reached by his own effort entitling him to the eternal life. He saw that he was so fully possessed with this idea that it regulated even his conception of Christ's own personal character, whom he was disposed to look upon rather as a preëminently virtuous man than one having any peculiar relationship to God. Checking him, therefore, at the very first—taking exception to the very form and manner of his address, he says, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God."

Endeavoring thus to raise his thoughts to the true source of all real goodness, rather than to say anything about his own connection with the Father, which it is no part of his present object to speak about, Jesus takes him first upon his own ground. There need be no talk about any one particularly good thing, that behooved to be done, till it was seen whether the common acknowledged precepts of God's law had been kept. "Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honor thy father and thy mother." As the easiest instrument of conviction, as the one that lay entirely in the very region to which all this youth's thoughts and efforts had been confined, Jesus restricted himself to quoting the precepts of the second table of the law, and says nothing in the meantime about the first. The young man, hearing the challenge, listens to the precepts as they are detailed, and promptly, without apparently a momentary misgiving, he answers, "All these have I observed from my youth." There was no doubt great ignorance, great self-deception in this reply. He knew but little of any one of these precepts in its true significance, in all the strictness, spirituality, and extent of its requirements, who could venture on any such assertion. Yet there was sincerity in the answer, and it pointed to a bygone life of singular external propriety, and that the fruit not so much of constraint as of natural amiableness and conscientiousness. As he gave this answer, Jesus beholding him loved him. It was new and refreshing to the Saviour's eye to see such a specimen as this of truthfulness and purity, of all that was morally lovely and of good report among the rulers of the Jews.



Here was no hypocrite, no fanatic, here was one who had not learned to wear the garb of sanctimoniousness as a cover for all kinds of self-indulgence; here was one free from the delusion that the strict observance of certain formulas of devotion would stand instead of the weightier matters of justice and of charity; here was one who so far had escaped the contagion of his age and sect, who was not seeking to make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but was really striving to keep himself from all that was wrong, and to be towards his fellow-men all that, as he understood it, God's law required. Jesus looked upon this man and loved him.

But the very love he bore him prompted Jesus to subject him to a treatment bearing in many respects a likeness to that to which he subjected Nicodemus. With not a little, indeed, that was different, there was much that was alike in the two rulers—the one who came to Jesus by night at the beginning of his ministry in Judea; the one who now comes to him by day at the close of his labors in Peræa; both honest, earnest men, seekers after truth, and lovers of it in a fashion too, but both ignorant and self-deceived; Nicodemus' error rather one of the head than of the heart, flowing from an entire misconception of the very nature of Christ's kingdom; the young ruler's one of the heart rather than of the head, flowing from an inordinate, an idolatrous attachment to his worldly possessions. In either case Christ's treatment was quick, prompt, decisive, laying the axe at once at the root of the evil. Beneath all the pleasing show of outward moralities Christ detected in the young ruler's breast a lamentable want of any true regard to God, any recognition of his supreme and paramount claims. His heart, his trust, his treasure, were in earthly, not in heavenly things. He needed a sharp lesson to teach him this, to lay bare at once the true state of things within. Christ was too kind and too skilful a physician to apply this or that emollient that might have power to allay a symptom or two of the outward irritation. At once he thrusts the probe into the very heart of the wound. "One thing thou lackest: go thy way," said he, at once assuming his proper place as the representative of God and of his claims—"go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor; and come, take up the cross, and follow me." The one thing lacking was not the renunciation of his property in bestowing it upon the poor. It was a supreme devotedness to God, to duty—a willingness to give up any thing, to give up every thing where God required it to be given up, when the holding of it was inconsistent with fidelity to him. This was the one thing lacking. And instead of proclaiming his fatal deficiency in this primary requirement, without which there could be no

true obedience rendered to any part of the Divine law, Christ embodies the claim which he knew the young ruler was unprepared to honor, in that form which struck directly at the idol of his heart, and required its instant and absolute dethronement.

Not for a moment, then, can we imagine that in speaking to him as he did, Jesus was issuing a general command, or laying down a universal condition of the Christian discipleship, or that he was even holding up the relinquishment of earthly possessions as an act of pre-eminent meritoriousness, which all strivers after Christian perfection should set before them as the summit to be reached. There is nothing of all this here. It is a special treatment of a special case. Christ's object being to frame and to apply a decisive touchstone or test whereby the condition of that one spirit might be exposed, he suited with admirable skill the test to the condition. Had that condition been other than it was, the test employed had been different. Had it been the love of pleasure, or the love of power, or the love of fame, instead of the love of money that had been the ruling passion, he would have framed his order so that obedience to it would have demanded the crucifixion of the ruling passion, the renunciation of the one cherished idol. The only one abiding universal rule that we are entitled to extract from this dealing of our Lord with this applicant being this: that in coming to Christ, in taking on the yoke of the Christian discipleship, it must be in the spirit of an entire readiness to part with all that he requires us to relinquish, and to allow no idol to usurp that inward throne that of right is his.

Christ's treatment, if otherwise it failed, was in one respect eminently successful. It silenced, it saddened, it sent away. No answer was attempted. No new question was raised. The demand was made in such broad, unmitigated, unambiguous terms, that the young ruler, conscious that he had never felt before the extent or pressure of such a demand, and that he was utterly unprepared to meet it, turned away disappointed and dissatisfied. Jesus saw him go, let him go, followed him with no importunities to return and to reconsider. It was not the manner of the Saviour to be importunate—you do not find in him any great urgency or iteration of appeal. When once in any case enough is said or done, the individual dealt with is left to his own free-will. Gazing after this young ruler as he departed, Jesus then looked round about, and said to his disciples, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" The disciples were astonished at these words, as well they might be. What! was the ease or the difficulty of entering into this kingdom to be measured by the little or by the more of this world's goods that

each man possessed? A strange premium this on poverty, as strange a penalty on wealth. Jesus notices the surprise that his saying had created, and, aware of the false track along which his disciples' thoughts were running, in a way as affectionate as it was instructive proceeded to explain the real meaning of what he had just said. "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" It is not the having but the trusting that creates the difficulty. It is not the kind or the quantity of the wealth possessed, but the kind or quantity of the attachment that is lavished upon it. The love of the penny may create as great impediment as the love of the pound. Nor is it our wealth alone that operates in this way, that raises a mighty obstacle in the way of entering into the kingdom. It is any thing else than God and Christ upon which the supreme affection of the spirit is bestowed. A new light dawns upon the disciples' minds as they listen to and begin to comprehend the explanation that their Master now has given, and see the extent to which that explanation goes. They were astonished at the first, but now the astonishment is more than doubled; for if it indeed be true, that before any individual of our race can cross the threshold of the kingdom, such a shift of the whole trust and confidence of the heart must take place—if every earthly living creature-attachment must be subordinated to the love of God and of Jesus Christ his Son, who then can be saved? for who can effect this great revolution within his own heart, who can take the dearest idol he has known and cast it down in the dust, who can lay hand upon the usurper and eject him, who can raise the rightful owner of it to the throne? Astonished out of measure, the disciples say among themselves, "Who then can be saved?" Is the question needless or inappropriate? Now is the time, if they have fallen into any mistake, if they are taking too dark, too gloomy views of the matter, if there be aught of error or of exaggeration in the conceptions out of which this question springs—now is the time for Jesus to rectify the error, to remove the misconception. Does he do so? Nay, but assuming that it is even so—as difficult to be saved as they imagine—his reply is, "With man it is impossible, but not with God, for with God all things are possible." Taught then by our Lord himself to know what all true entering into his kingdom implies and presupposes, let us be well assured that to be saved in his sense of the word is no such easy thing as many fancy, the difficulty not lying in any want of willingness on his part to save us—not in any hinderance whatever lying there without. All such outward impediments have been, by his own gracious hand, and by the work of his dear Son our Saviour removed. The difficulty lies

within, in our misplaced affections, in our stubborn and obstinate wills, in hearts that will not let go their hold of other things to clasp him home to them as their only satisfying good. Do you feel the difficulty—the moral impossibility of this hinderance being taken away by yourselves? Then will you pray to him with whom this, as every thing, is possible, that he may turn the possibility into reality. He has done so in the case of multitudes as weak, as impotent as you. He will do it unto you if you desire that it be done, and commit the doing of it into his hands.

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## XVI.

### JESUS AT JERICHO—THE REQUEST OF THE SONS OF ZEBEDEE.\*

No district of the Holy Land is more unlike what it once was and what it still might be than that in which Jericho, the city of palms, once stood. Its position, commanding the two chief passes up to the hill country of Judea and Samaria, the depth and fertility of its well-watered soil, and the warmth of its tropical climate, early indicated it as the site of a city which should not only be the capital of the surrounding territory, but the protection of all western Palestine against invaders from the east. Joshua found it so when he crossed the Jordan: and as his first step towards the conquest of the country which lay beyond, laid siege to a city which had walls broad enough to have houses built upon them, and whose spoil when taken, its gold and its silver, its vessels of brass and of iron, its goodly Babylonish garments, bore evidence of affluence and of traffic. No town in all the territory which the Israelites afterwards acquired westward of Jordan could compete with Jericho. It fell, was reduced to ruins, and the curse of Joshua pronounced upon the man who attempted to raise again its walls.† In the days of Ahab that attempt was made, and though the threatened evil fell upon the maker, the city rose

\* Matt. 20:17-34; Mark 10:2-52; Luke 18:35-43, 20:2-10.

† Within two miles of it, sharing in all its great natural advantages, stood Gilgal, the first encampment of the Israelites, where the ark stood till its removal to Shiloh, which we read of as one of the stations to which Samuel resorted in administering justice throughout the country, where the tribes so often met in the days of Saul, to which the men of Judah went down to welcome David back again to Jerusalem.



from its ruins to enter upon another stage of progressive prosperity, which reached its highest point when Herod the Great selected it as one of his favorite resorts, beautified it with towers and palaces, becoming so attached to it that, feeling his last illness to have come upon him, he retired there to die. Soon after his death the town was plundered, and some of its finest buildings were destroyed. These, however, were speedily restored to all their original splendor by Archelaus, and as he left it Josephus has described it—its stately buildings rising up among groves of palm-trees miles in length, with gardens scattered round, in which all the chief flowers and fruits of eastern lands grew up in the greatest luxuriance. The rarest and most precious among them, the balsam, a treasure “worth its own weight in silver, for which kings made war,”\* “so that he,” says the Jewish historian, as he warms in his recital of all its glories, “he who should pronounce the place to be divine would not be mistaken, wherein is such plenty of trees produced as is very rare, and of the most excellent sort. And, indeed, if we speak of these other fruits, it will not be easy to light on any climate in the habitable earth that can well be compared to it.” And such as Josephus has described was Jericho and the country round when Christ’s eye rested on them, in descending into the valley of the Jordan; and above the tops of the palm-trees, and the roofs of the palaces, he saw the trace of the road that led up to Jerusalem. None besides the twelve had gone with him into the retreats of Ephraim and Peræa. But now he is on the track of the companies from the north, who are going up to the Passover, that is to be celebrated at the close of the following week. The time, the company, the road, all serve to bring up to the Saviour’s thoughts events that are now so near, to him of such momentous import. A spirit of eager impatience to be baptized with the impending baptism seizes upon him, and gives a strange quickness and a forwardness to his movements. His talk, his gait, his gestures all betoken how absorbed he is; the eye and thought away from the present, from all around, fixed upon some future, the purport of which has wonderfully excited him. His hasty footsteps carry him on before his fellow-travellers. “Jesus went before them,” St. Mark tells us, “and they were amazed; and as they followed they were afraid.” There was that in his aspect, attitude, and actions that filled them with wonder and with awe. It was not long till an explanation was offered them. He took the twelve aside, and once again, as twice before, but now with still greater minuteness and particularity of detail, told them what was about to happen within a few days at Jerusalem: how he

\* Martineau.

was to be delivered into the hands of the Jewish rulers, and how they were to deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles, how he was to be mocked and scourged, and spit upon and crucified, till all things that were written by the prophets concerning him should be accomplished, and how on the third he was to rise again. Every thing was told so plainly that we may well wonder that any one could have been at any loss as to Christ's meaning; but the disciples we are told, "understood none of these things, and the sayings were hid from them, neither knew they the thing which was spoken." This only proves what a blinding power preconception and misconception have in hiding the simplest things told in the simplest language—a blinding power often exercised over us now as to the written, as it was then exercised over the apostles as to their Master's spoken words. The truth is, that these men were utterly unprepared at the time to take in the real truth as to what was to happen to their Master. They had made up their minds, on the best of evidence, that he was the Messiah. He had himself lately confirmed them in that faith. But they had their own notions of the Messiahship. With these such sufferings and such a death as were actually before Jesus were utterly inconsistent. They could be but figurative expressions, then, that he had employed, intended, perhaps, to represent some severe struggle with his adversaries through which he had to pass before his kingdom was set up and acknowledged.

One thing alone was clear—that the time so long looked forward to had come at last. This visit to Jerusalem was to witness the erection of the kingdom. All other notions lost in that, the thought of the particular places they were to occupy in that kingdom entered again into the hearts of two of the apostles—that pair of brothers who, from early adherence, and the amount of sacrifice they had made, and the marked attention that on more than one occasion Jesus had paid to them, might naturally enough expect that if special favors were to be dispensed to any, they would not be overlooked. James and John tell their mother Salome, who has met them by the way, all that they have lately noticed in the manner of their Master, and all that he has lately spoken, pointing to the approaching pass-over as the season when the manifestation of the kingdom was to be made. Mother and sons agree to go to Jesus with the request that in his kingdom and glory the one brother should sit upon his right hand and the other upon his left, a request that in all likelihood took its particular shape and form from what Jesus had said but a few days before, when, in answer to Peter's question, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" And

Jesus said unto them, "Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Matt. 19:27, 28. What could these thrones, this judging be? Little wonder that the apostles' minds were set a speculating by what still leaves us, after all our speculating, about as much in the dark as ever. But while Salome and James and John were proffering their request, and trying to preëngage the places of highest honor, where was Peter? It had not come into *his* thought to seek a private interview with his Master for such a purpose. He had no mother by his side to fan the flame that was as ready to kindle in his as in any of their breasts. That without any thought of one whose natural claims were as good as theirs, James and John should have gone to Jesus and made the request they did, satisfies us at least of this, that it was not the understanding among the twelve that when the Lord had spoken to Peter as he did after his good confession, he had assigned to him the primacy, or indeed any particular preëminence, over the rest.

"Ye know not what ye ask." They did it ignorantly, and so far they obtain mercy of the Lord. What it was to be placed on his right and on his left in the scenes that awaited him in Jerusalem, two at least of the three petitioners, John and Salome, shall soon know as they stand gazing upon the central cross of Calvary. "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say, We can." From this reply it would appear that the disciples understood the Lord as asking them whether they are prepared to drink along with him some cup of sorrow that was about soon to be put into his hands, to be baptized along with him in some baptism of fire to which he was about to be subjected. They are prepared, they think that they can follow him, they are willing to take their part in whatever suffering such following shall entail. Through all the selfishness, and the ambition, and the great ignorance of the future that their request revealed, there shone out in this prompt and no doubt perfectly sincere and honest reply, a true and deep attachment to their Master, a readiness to suffer with him or for him. And he is far quicker to recognize the one than to condemn the other. "Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized." 'You, James, shall be the first among the twelve that shall seal your testimony with your blood. You, John, shall have the longest if not the largest experience of what the bearing of the cross shall bring with it. But to sit on my right and on my left



in my kingdom and my glory, ask me not for that honor as if it were a thing in the conferring of which I am at liberty to consult my own individual will or taste or humor. It is not mine so to dispense. It is mine to give, but only to those for whom it is prepared of my Father, and who by the course of discipline through which he shall pass them shall be duly prepared for it.'

James and John have to be content with such reply. Their application, though made to Christ when alone, soon after became known to others, and excites no small stir among them. Which of them indeed may cast the first stone at the two? They had all been quarrelling among themselves not long before, as to which of them should be greatest. And they shall all ere long be doing so again. Christ's word of rebuke as he hears of this contention is for all as well as for James and John. He tells us that no such kind of authority and power as is practised in earthly government—the authority of men, rank, or power carrying it dictatorially and tyrannically over subjects and dependants—is to be admitted among his disciples; greatness among them being a thing to be measured not by the amount of power possessed, but by the amount of service rendered, by their greater likeness to the Son of man, "who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." The contention is thus momentarily hushed, to break out again, when it shall receive a still more impressive rebuke.

Jesus and his disciples, and a great multitude of people who had joined themselves to him by the way, now drew near to Jericho. Of what occurred in and near the city I offer no continuous narrative, for it is difficult to frame such out of the details which the different evangelists present. St. Mark and St. Luke tell us of one blind man only who was healed. St. Matthew tells us of two. Two of the three evangelists speak of the healing as having occurred on Christ's departure out of the town, the third of its having taken place on his entrance into it. We may conclude with certainty that there were two, and we may conjecture there were three blind men cured on this occasion. In a city so large as Jericho then was, computed to contain well-nigh 100,000 inhabitants—the number swelled by the strangers on their way to the passover—it would not surprise us that more cases than one of the kind described should have occurred. One general remark upon this and all similar discrepancies in the gospel narratives may be offered. It is quite enough to vindicate the entire truthfulness of each separate account, that we can imagine some circumstance or circumstances omitted by all, the occurrence of which would enable us to reconcile them. How often does it happen



that two or three witnesses each tell what they saw and heard; their testimonies taken by themselves present almost insuperable difficulties in the way of reconciling them; yet when the whole in all its minute details is known, the key is then put into our hands by which the apparent discord is at once removed. And when the whole never can be known, is it not the wisest course to let the discrepancies remain just as we find them; satisfied if we can imagine any way by which all that each narrator says is true?

This can easily enough be done in the case before us. Satisfied with this, let us fix our attention on the stories of Bartimeus and Zaccheus, on the two striking incidents by which our Lord's entrance into and exit from Jericho were made for ever memorable. How different in all the outward circumstances of their lot in life were these two men!—the one a poor blind beggar, the other among the richest men in the community. The revenues derived from the palm-trees and balsam-gardens of Jericho were so great, that the grant of them was one of the richest gifts which Antony presented Cleopatra. Herod farmed them of the latter, and intrusted the collection of them to these publicans, of whom Zaccheus was the chief. His position was one enabling him to realize large gains, and we may believe that of that position he had taken the full advantage. Unlike in other things, in this Bartimeus and Zaccheus were at one—in their eagerness, their earnestness, their perseverance, their resolution to use all possible means to overcome all obstacles thrown in the way of their approach to Christ. The poor blind beggar sits beneath the shade of some towering palm, waiting to salute each stray passenger as he goes by, and solicit alms. Suddenly he hears the tread as of a great multitude approaching. He wonders what it can be. He asks; they tell him that Jesus of Nazareth is coming, and is about to pass by. Jesus of Nazareth! he had heard of him before, heard of healings wrought by him, of blind eyes opened, of dead men raised. Many a time in his darkness, in his solitude, as he sat alone by the wayside, he had pondered who this great miracle-worker could be, and he had come to the conclusion that he could be no other than the Son of David, the Messiah promised to their fathers. It had never crossed his thoughts that he and this Jesus should ever meet, when now they tell him that he is near at hand, will soon be passing by. He can, he may do that for him which none but he can do. The whole faith and hope of his spirit breathed into it, he lifts the loud and eager cry, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." They check him, they blame him, in every way they can they try to stop him. He cries "the more a great deal;" it is his one and only

chance. He will not lose it, he will do all he can to reach that ear, to arrest that passer-by. He cries the more a great deal, "Son of David, have mercy on me."

So is it with the poor blind beggar, and so is it with the rich publican. He too hears that Jesus of Nazareth is coming into Jericho. He too has heard much about the Nazarene. He is living now, he may have been living then, in the very neighborhood where John the Baptist taught, where Jesus was himself baptized. The gospel of the kingdom as preached by both, the gospel of repentance, of turning from all iniquity and bringing forth fruits meet for repentance, was familiar to his ears. The Baptist's answer to publicans when they came to him, "Exact no more than that which is appointed you," had sunk into his heart. That was the kingdom, the kingdom of truth, of righteousness, into which now above all things he desired to enter. With a conscience quickened, a heart melted and subdued we know not how, he hears that Jesus is at hand. What would he not give even for a sight of one whom secretly he has learned to reverence and to love! He goes out, but there is a crowd coming; he cannot stand its pressure; he is little of stature, and in the bustle and the throng will not be able even to catch a sight of Jesus. A happy thought occurs: he sees behind him a large tree which casts its branching arms across the path. He runs and climbs up into the tree. He cares not for the ridicule with which he may be assailed. He cares not for the grotesque position which he, the rich man and the honorable, may be seen to occupy. He is too bent upon his purpose to let that or anything stand in the way of the accomplishment of his desire.

And now let us notice how these two men are treated. Jesus stands still as he comes near the spot where poor Bartimeus stands and cries, points to him, and tells those around him to go and bring him into his presence. The crowd halts. The messengers do Christ's bidding. And now the very men who had been rebuking Bartimeus for his too loud and too impatient entreaties, touched with pity, say, "Be of good comfort, rise, he calleth thee." He does not need to be told a second time, he does not wait for any guiding hands to lead him to the centre of the path. His own quick ear has fixed the point from which the summons comes. His own ready arm flings aside the rude garment that he had worn, which might hinder him in his movement. A few eager footsteps taken, he stands in the presence of the Lord. Nor has he then to renew his supplication. Jesus is the first to speak. "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" There are not many things among which to choose. There is that one thing that above all others he would have done. "Lord,"

says he, "that I might receive my sight." And Jesus said, "Receive thy sight, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole." And immediately he received his sight.

See now how it fares with Zaccheus. He has got up into the tree, he is sitting there among its branches, half hoping that, seeing all, he may remain himself unseen. The crowd comes up. He does not need to ask which is the one he desires so much to see. There he is, the centre of the throng, his calm, majestic, benignant look and bearing marking him off from all around. The eyes of the chief publican are bent upon him in one fixed concentrated gaze of wonder and of love, when a new ground of wonder and of gratitude is given. Here too Jesus stops, and looking up he names him by his name, as if he had known him long and well. "Zaccheus," he said, "make haste and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house."

Such is the free spontaneous mercy in either case exercised by our Lord; such is the way in which he meets simplicity of faith, ardor of desire, strenuousness of effort, as seen in the blind beggar and in the rich publican. And what in either case is the return? "Go thy way," said Jesus to Bartimeus. He did not go, he could not go. His blinded eyes are opened. The first object they rest on is their opener. Bright shines the sun above—fair is that valley of the Jordan—gorgeous the foliage of the palm and the sycamore, the acacia and the balsam-tree. New and wondrous sights to him, but he sees them not, or heeds them not. That fresh faculty of vision is exercised on Him by whom it had been bestowed, and upon Him all the wealth of its power is lavished. And him "he follows, glorifying God." Not otherwise is it with Zaccheus: "Make haste," said Jesus, "and come down." And he made haste, and came down, and received Christ joyfully, little heeding the derisive looks cast on him as he made his quick descent, the murmurings that arose from the multitude as he received Jesus into his house. The threshold is scarcely crossed when he stands in all humility before Jesus and says: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." One scarce can tell whether he is describing a practice for some time previously pursued, or a purpose then for the first time in the presence of Jesus deliberately taken. In either case the evidence of a true repentance on his part is the same. The man among the Jews who gave the fifth part of his income to the poor, was counted as having reached the height of perfection as to almsgiving. Zaccheus gives one-half, and not one-fifth. The law of Moses required in one special case alone that a fourfold restitution should

be made Zaccheus, in every instance in which he can remember that by any dishonorable practice on his part any man had suffered loss, promises that restitution to that extent should be made to him. Jesus, accepting the evidence of a true repentance that is thus presented, makes no criticism upon the course of conduct indicated, suggests no change, but says, "This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham"—once a lost sheep of the chosen fold, lost, but now found by the Good Shepherd, and by him welcomed back—"for the Son of man," he adds, "is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

One general feature of these incidents at Jericho let us now glance at, as singularly appropriate to this particular period of our Lord's history, the absence of all reserve, the full disclosure of himself and of his redemption which he makes. Other blind men had called him the Son of David, but he had straitly charged them not to make him known. No such charge is given to Bartimeus. He is permitted to follow him and glorify God as loudly, as amply as he can. Not till the last stage of his ministry in the north had he ever spoken even to his disciples of his death. Now he not only speaks to them more plainly and explicitly than ever before, but he goes on to announce the great intention and object of his death. The Son of Man, he declares, is come "to give his life a ransom for many; to seek and to save that which was lost." Thus it is, as the time is now so near, and as all the reasons for that reserve which Jesus had previously studied are removed, that he holds up his death as the payment of the great price of our redemption, the ransom given by the Living One for the lost.

Two better instances illustrative of how the sinner and the Saviour are brought together, of what true faith is, and what true repentance, you could not well desire, than those of Bartimeus and Zaccheus, capable each of manifold spiritual applications. We can but gather up the general warnings and great encouragements that they convey. Sinners we all by nature and practice are—as poor, as blind, as beggared as Bartimeus was—as thoughtless, careless, reckless, worldly-minded as Zaccheus. And Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. It is but a single day we have for meeting with him, that short day of life, the twelve hours of which are so swiftly running out. Let us but be as earnest to see him as those two men were, as careless of what others say or do, as resolute to overcome all difficulties; and we shall find that he will be as ready to hear, to heal, to come to us, to take up his abode with us, to bring salvation with him, to gather us, the lost, into the fold of the saved.



Jericho is changed from what it was. So little is left of the city, of its hippodrome and amphitheatre, its towers and its palaces, that it is difficult to determine its site. Its gardens and its groves are gone, not one solitary palm-tree for a blind beggar to sit beneath, nor a sycamore for any one to climb. The City of Fragrance it was called of old. There remains now but the fragrance of those deeds of grace and mercy done there by him who in passing through it closed his earthly journeyings, and went up thence to Jerusalem to die.

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## XVII.

### THE ANOINTING AT BETHANY.\*

IN the whole bearing and conduct of Jesus in and about Jericho there was much to indicate that some great crisis in his history was at hand. It does not surprise us to be told of the disciples' believing "that the kingdom of God should immediately appear." It was because he knew that they were so misconceiving the future that lay before him and them, that, either in the house of Zaccheus, or afterwards on the way up to Jerusalem, Jesus addressed to them the parable of the Pounds. He would have them know, and could they but have penetrated the meaning of that parable they would have seen, that so far from any such kingdom as they were dreaming of being about to be set up for him in Jerusalem, he was going through the dark avenue of death to another, to a far country, to receive the kingdom there, and after a long interval to return; and that, so far from their being about to share the honors and rewards of a newly erected empire, they were to be left without a Head, each man to occupy and to labor till He came again. Another parable, that of the Laborers in the Vineyard, spoken but a day or two before, had a kindred object—was intended to check the too eager and ambitious thirst for the distinctions and recompenses that the apostles imagined were on the eve of being dispensed. The addressing of two such parables as these to his disciples, with the specific object of rectifying what he knew to be their false ideas and expectations, the readiness with which he listened to the cry of the blind beggars by the wayside, and the interest that he took in the chief of the publicans, conspire to show how far from a mere narrow or selfish one was the interest with which Jesus looked forward to what was awaiting him

\* Matt. 26 : 6-13 ; Mark 14 : 3-9 ; John 12 : 1-8.

in Jerusalem. During the two days' journey from Perea through Jericho to the holy city, his thoughts were often and absorbingly fixed on his approaching sufferings and death, but it was not so much in their isolated and personal as in their public and world-wide bearings and issues that he was contemplating them; nor had the contemplation any such effect as to make him less attentive to the state of thought and feeling prevailing among his disciples, or less ready to be interested in those who, like Bartimeus and Zaccheus, threw themselves in his way.

— In coming down into the valley of the Jordan, Jesus had joined the large and growing stream of people from the north and the east, passing up to the approaching Passover. There would be many Galileans among the group who had not seen him now for many months, and who, if they had not heard of it before, must have heard now at Jericho of all that had happened at the two preceding Feasts of Tabernacles and Dedication, of his last great miracle at Bethany, of the great excitement that had been created, and of the resolution of the Sanhedrim to put him to death. And now he goes up to face these rulers, to throw himself, as they fancy, upon the support of the people, to unfold the banner of the new kingdom, and call on all his followers to rally round it. His Galilean friends heartily go in with what they take to be his designs; they find the people generally concurring in and disposed to further them. One can imagine what was thought and felt, and hoped and feared, by those who accompanied Jesus as he left Jericho. A few hours' walk would now carry him and them to the metropolis. It was Friday, the 8th day of their Jewish month Nisan. The next day was Saturday, their Jewish Sabbath. On the Thursday following the lamb was to be slain, and the Passover festival to commence. — The great body of the travellers press on, to get into the town before the sunset, when the Sabbath commences. Jesus and his apostles turn aside at Bethany, where the house of Martha and Mary and Lazarus stands open to receive them. Here in this peaceful retreat the next day is spent, a quiet Sabbath for our Lord before entering on the turmoil of the next few days. The companions of his last day's journey have in the meantime passed into Jerusalem. It is already thronged with those who had come up from the country to purify themselves for the feast. With one and all the engrossing topic is Jesus of Nazareth. Gathering in the courts of the temple, they ask about him, they hear what has occurred; they find that "both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that if any man knew where he was, he should show it, that they might take him." What, in the face of

such an order, will Jesus do? "What think ye," they say to one another, "that he will *not* come to the feast?" But now they hear from the newly arrived from Jericho that he is coming, means to be at the feast, is already at Bethany. They hear that Lazarus, the man whom he so recently raised from the dead, is also there. He may not have been there till now. He may have accompanied Jesus to Ephraim, or chosen some other place of temporary retreat, for a bitter enmity had sprung up against him as well as against Jesus. "The chief priests had consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death, because that by reason of him many of the Jews believed on Jesus." Whether he had retired for a time or not, Lazarus is now at Bethany. Many, unable to restrain their curiosity, go out to the village, "not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also." It was but a short distance, not much more than a Sabbath-day's journey. During this day, while Jesus and Lazarus are there together, many visitors go forth to feast their eyes upon the sight, and on returning to quicken the excitement among the multitude.

It was on the evening of the Saturday, when the Sabbath was over, and the next, the first day of the week, had begun, that they made Jesus a supper in the house of Simon, who once had been a leper, some near relative in all likelihood of the family of Lazarus, and Jesus sits at this feast between the one whom he had cured of his leprosy and the other whom he had raised from the dead. Martha serves. She had not so read the rebuke before administered to her as to believe that serving—the thing that she most liked, to which her disposition and her capabilities at once prompted her—was in itself unlawful or improper, that her only duty was to sit and listen. But she had so profited by the rebuke that, concerned as she is that all due care be taken that this feast be well served, she turns now no jealous look upon her sister, leaves Mary without murmuring or reproach to do as she desires. And Mary seizes the opportunity now given. She has not now Jesus to herself. She cannot, as in the privacy of her own dwelling, sit down at his feet to listen to the gracious words coming from his lips. But she has an alabaster phial of fragrant ointment—her costliest possession—one treasured up for some unknown but great occasion. That occasion has arrived. She gets it, brings it, approaches Jesus as he sits reclining at the table, pours part of its contents upon his head, and resolves that the whole contents shall be expended upon him. She compresses the yielding material of which the phial was composed, breaks it, and pours the last drop of it upon his feet, flinging away the relics of the broken

vessel, and wiping his feet with her hair. Kingly guest at royal banquet could not have had a costlier homage of the kind rendered to him. That Mary had in her possession so rich a treasure may be accepted as one of the many signs that her family was one of the wealthiest in the village. That she now took and spent the whole of it upon Jesus, was but a final expression of the fulness and the intensity of her devotion and her love.

Half hidden behind the Saviour's reclining form, she might have remained unnoticed, but the fragrant odor rose and filled the house, and drew attention to her deed. Cold and searching and jealous eyes are upon her, chiefly those of one who never had any cordial love to Jesus, who never had truly sympathized with the homage rendered him, who held the bag, had got himself appointed keeper of the small purse they had in common, who already had been tampering with the trust, and greedily filching from the narrow stores committed to his care. Love so ardent, consecration so entire, sacrifice so costly as that of Mary, he could not appreciate. He disliked it, condemned it; it threw such a reproach by contrast upon his own feeling and conduct to Christ. And now to his envious, avaricious spirit it appears that he has got good ground for censure. He had been watching the movements of Mary, had seen her bring forth the phial, had measured its size, had gauged the quantity, estimated the quality, and calculated the value of its contents. And now he turns to his fellow-disciples, and whispers in their ears the invidious question, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" Three hundred pence! equal to the hire of a laborer for a whole year—a sum capable of relieving many a child of poverty, of bringing relief to many a house of want. Had Judas got the money into his own hands—instead of being all lavished on this act of outward attention, had it been thrown into the common stock—it would not have been upon the poor that it should have been spent. He would have managed that no small part of the money should have had a very different direction given it. But it serves his mean malicious object to suggest that such might have been its destination. And by his craft, which has a show in it of a wise and thoughtful benevolence, he draws more than one of his fellow-apostles along with him, so that not loud but deep, the murmuring runs round the table, and they say to one another, "To what purpose is this waste? this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor."

Mary hears the murmuring, sees the eyes of one and another turned askance and condemningly upon her, shrinks under the de-



tracting criticism of the Lord's own apostles, begins to wonder whether she may not have done something wrong, been guilty of a piece of extravagance which even Jesus may perhaps condemn. It had been hard for her before to bear the reproach of her bustling sister, but harder a thousand times to bear the reproach of the twelve. But neither then nor now did she make any answer, offer any defence of herself. She did not need. She had one to do that office for her far better than she could have done it for herself. Jesus is there to throw the mantle of his protection over her, to explain and vindicate her deed. "Let her alone," he said, "why trouble ye the woman? she hath wrought a good work upon me." He might have singled out the first adverse criticiser of Mary's act, the suggester and propagator of the censorious judgment that was making its round of the table. Then and there he might have exposed the hollowness, the hypocrisy of the pretence about *his* caring for the poor, upon which the condemnation of Mary was based. And doing so, he might have made the others blush that they had given such ready ear to a speech that such a mean and malignant spirit had first broached. He did not do this, at least he said nothing that had any peculiar and exclusive reference to Judas. But there must have been something in our Lord's manner—a look perhaps, such as he bent afterwards on Peter in the judgment-hall—that let Judas know that before Jesus he stood a detected thief and hypocrite. And it was not to weep bitterly that he went forth from that supper, but with a spirit so galled and fretted that he took the earliest opportunity that occurred to him to commune with the chief priests and the temple guard as to how he might betray his master, and deliver him into their hands.

— Losing sight of him, let us return to Christ's defence of Mary. "She hath done a good work," he said, 'a noble work, one not only far from censure, but worthy of all praise. She hath done it unto *me*, done it out of pure deep love—a love that will bring the best, the costliest thing she has, and think it no waste, but rather its fittest, worthiest application, to bestow it upon me.' Upon that ground alone, upon his individual claims as compared with all others, Jesus might well have rested his vindication of Mary's act. Nay, might he not have taken the censure of her as a disparagement of himself? All these his general claims—which go to warrant the highest, costliest, most self-sacrificing services that an enthusiastic piety can render—he in this instance is content to waive, fixing upon the peculiarity of his existing position and the speciality of the particular service that she has rendered, as supplying of themselves an ample

justification of the deed that had been condemned. The claims of the poor had been set up, as if they stood opposed to any such expenditure of property as that made by Mary in this anointing of the Saviour. It was open to Christ to say that it was an altogether needless, false, injurious conflict thus sought to be stirred up—as if to give to him, to do anything for him, were to take so much from the poor; as if no portion of the great fund of the church's wealth was available for any purely devout and religious purpose till all the wants of all the poor were met and satisfied—wants, be it remembered, of such a kind that though we supplied them all to-day, would emerge in some new form to-morrow—wants which it is impossible so to deal with as wholly and permanently to relieve. He is no enlightened pleader for the poor who would represent them and their necessities as standing in the way of the indulgence of those warm impulses of love to Christ, out of which princely benefactions, as well as many a deed of heroic self-sacrifice, have emanated. The spirit of Judas, indeed—cold, calculating, carping, disparaging—has often crept even into the Christian society, and men bearing the name of Jesus have often been ready, when great donations on behalf of some strictly religious enterprise were spoken of, to condemn them off-hand on this one ground, that it would have been much better had the money been bestowed upon the poor. Just as, when a large estate was once sold in this country, and the proprietor, moved by a favored idea, resolved to devote the entire proceeds of the sale to Christian missions in India, there were not wanting those who said—I quote now the words of one of them—"What a mad scheme this of Haldane's! How many poor people might that money have fed and clothed?" The world, let us bless God for it, is not so poor that there is but one way—that, namely, of almsgiving—for gratifying those generous impulses which visit the heart and impel to acts of singular liberality. He who put it into the heart of Mary to do what she did towards the person of Christ, has put it into the hearts of others since to do like things towards his cause. And if in many such like instances there be more of mere emotion, more of the indulgence of individual taste than of staid and wise-hearted Christian benevolence, let us not join with the condemners of them, unless we be prepared to put a check upon all the free, spontaneous expressions of those sentiments of veneration, gratitude, and love to Jesus Christ, out of which some of the most chivalrous and heroic deeds have sprung by which the history of our race has been adorned.

It is, however, as has been already said, upon somewhat narrower ground that Christ vindicates the act of Mary. It was one of such

personal attention to him as could be shown to him only while he was present in the flesh. "The poor," said he, "ye have with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good, but me ye have not always." Further still, it was one that but once only in all his earthly life could be shown to Jesus, for "in that she hath poured this ointment on me, she is come aforehand to anoint my body for the burial." Had Mary any definite idea that she was doing beforehand what Joseph and Nicodemus would have no time and opportunity for doing, what the two other Marys would go out to do to find only that the need for its being done was over and gone? It may be assuming too much for her to believe that, with a clearer insight and a simpler faith in what Jesus had said than had yet been reached by any of the twelve, she anticipated the death and burial of her Master as near at hand. But neither can we think that she acted without some vague presentiment that she was seizing upon a last opportunity, that the days of such intercourse with Jesus were drawing to an end. She knew the perils to which he would be exposed whenever he entered Jerusalem. She had heard him speak of his approaching sufferings and death. To others the words might appear to be without meaning, or only to be allegorically interpreted, but the quick instinct of her deeper love had refused to regard them so, and they had filled her bosom with an indefinite dread. The nearer the time for losing, the more intense became the clinging to him. Had she believed as the others around her did, had she looked forward to a speedy triumph of Jesus over all his enemies, and to the visible erection of his kingdom, would she have chosen the time she did for the anointing? would she not have reserved to a more fitting opportunity a service that was more appropriate to the crowning of a new monarch than the preparing of a living body for the tomb? In speaking as he did, Jesus may have been only attributing to Mary a fuller understanding of and simpler faith in his own prophetic utterances than that possessed at the time by any of his disciples. Such a conception of her state of mind and heart would elevate Mary to a still higher pinnacle than that ordinarily assigned to her, and we can see no good reason for doubting that it was even so. But it does not require that we should assign to her any such preëminence of faith. It was the intensity of the personal attachment to Jesus that her act expressed which drew down upon it the encomium of the Lord. Thus he had to say of it what he could say of so few single services of any of his followers—that in it she did what she could, did all she could—in that direction there was not a step farther that she could have taken. Of all like ways and forms of expressing

attachment there was not a higher one that she could have chosen. Her whole heart of love went out in the act, and therefore Jesus said of it, "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her"—the one and only case in which Jesus ever spoke of the after earthly fame of any service rendered to him, predicting for it such a widespread reputation and such an undying remembrance. Thus said Chrysostom, when discoursing upon this incident: "While the victories of many kings and generals are lost in silence, and many who have founded states and reduced nations to subjection are not known by reputation or by name, the pouring of ointment by this woman is celebrated throughout the whole world. Time hath passed away, but the memory of the deed she did hath not waned away. But Persians and Indians and Scythians and Thracians, and the race of the Mauritians, and they who inhabit the British Isles, publish abroad an act which was done in Judea privately in a house by a woman." Fourteen hundred years have passed and gone since in the great church of St. Sophia at Constantinople Chrysostom uttered these words, referring to these British Isles as one of the remotest places of the then known world. The centuries that have rolled by since then have witnessed many a revolution, not the least wonderful among them the place that these British Isles now occupy, but still wider and wider is the tale of Mary's anointing of her Master being told, the fragrance of the ointment spreading, yet losing nothing of its sweetness; such fresh vitality, such self-preserving power, lodging in a simple act of pure and fervid love.

One single parting glance let us cast upon our Saviour as he presents himself to our eye upon this occasion. He sits at a festive board. He is surrounded by men looking joyously forward to days and years of success and triumph. But he knows what they do not—that on that day week his body will be lying in the new-made sepulchre. And he accepts the anointing at Mary's hand as preparing his body for the burial. He sits the invited guest of a man who had been a leper, surrounded in that village home by a few humble followers. With serene eye he looks down into the future, and abroad over the earth, and speaks of it as a thing of certainty that this gospel—the gospel of glad tidings of salvation in his name—was to be preached throughout the whole world. If it be true that Jesus thought and felt and spoke and acted thus, how vain the attempt to explain away his foresight of the future, to reduce it to the dimensions of the highest human wisdom sagaciously anticipating what was afterwards to occur.





## THE PASSION WEEK.

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### I.

#### THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM—JESUS WEeping OVER THE CITY.\*

SUNDAY.

THE road from Jericho to Jerusalem, as it winds up the eastern slopes of Olivet, passes close by the village of Bethany. From the village a footpath runs up to the top of the mount, and thence down a steep declivity into the ravine of the Kedron. This being the shortest, may have been the path ordinarily taken by the villagers when going on foot to and from Jerusalem. It was not the way that any rider, not the way that the caravans of Passover pilgrims coming up from Jericho, would choose. They naturally would take the somewhat longer, but much better and more level road, which runs round the southern shoulder of the ridge as it shelves down toward the Mount of Offence. The single circumstance that, on the occasion now before us, Jesus rode into the city, might of itself have led us to believe that it was by the latter road he went. Still further confirmation of this meets us as we enter into the details of this short but ever memorable procession.

The quiet day of Sabbatic rest at Bethany is over. Released from its restraints, visitors may now freely pass from Jerusalem to Bethany. Of this freedom numbers avail themselves, and the village is crowded. It is understood that at some time in the course of the day—the first day of the week—Jesus means to go into the city. During the forenoon the tidings of his intention are widely circulated. It was now but four days to the Passover, and the crowds of pilgrims, requiring as they did a day or two of preparation, have nearly all arrived. In and about Jerusalem between two and three millions of

people\*—more than a third of the entire population of Judea and Galilee—are assembled. The town itself is unable to afford accommodation to all the strangers. The environs all around are studded with booths and tents. The side of Olivet that looks toward the city, not the least favorite suburb, along which the road from Jericho descends, is covered with these temporary erections. In the afternoon Jesus leaves the village and joins the companies coming up from the valley of the Jordan. The road winds southward for a short distance out upon a ledge of the mountain, from the top of which is caught a distant view of a part of Mount Zion lying outside the walls, the great city itself being concealed. At this point, immediately before and beneath the traveller, there is a deep hollow running up into and dying out upon the hill side, to avoid descending into which the road takes first a sudden bend to the right, till it reaches nearly to the top of the ravine, and then turns again to the left, to traverse the opposite spur of the mountain. Pausing for a moment at this spot, Jesus sees ‘over against’ him, across the hollow, the village of Bethphage.† Calling two of his disciples he bids them go by the short cut across the valley to the village, and bring an ass and a colt that they would find there, and to have them ready upon the road running near to Bethphage by the time that he and the rest of the disciples have made the round by the head of the hollow.‡ The disciples listen with wonder to these instructions. It is but a short distance into the town—an hour’s walk, or less; it cannot be through weariness that Jesus wishes to have an ass to ride upon. He had seldom if ever before used this mode of travelling, one not having any special dignity in our eyes, but one that highest dignitaries in the East, kings and princes, prophets and priests, might not unsuitably, upon the most important occasions, make use of. Can it be that the hour so long waited for has come? Can it be that Jesus

\*Josephus estimates the numbers present on a Passover occasion at about three millions, little short of half the population of the two provinces. The number of lambs slain is stated to have been 256,500.

† The description of the text is derived from a minute personal examination of the localities. Upon the spot where in that description the village of Bethphage is represented as standing, tanks and foundations were perceived, the undoubted evidences of the former existence of a village. The site is the same, I presume, as the one assigned to the village by Dr. Barelay in the *City of the Great King*. It fully and minutely answers, as I have endeavored to indicate, all the requirements of the narrative.

‡ As usual, the narrative of St. Mark is characterized by the mention of minute particulars, such as the finding of the colt ‘by the door without, in a place where two ways met.’ St. Mark may have received his information from St. Peter, who may have been one of the two sent across the valley by Christ.

is about to throw off his disguise, assume his real rank and character, and enter the capital as the king of the Jews? As they move on, groups of pilgrims coming out from Jerusalem meet them by the way. To them they tell the orders Christ has given—tell the hopes that are rising in their hearts. The excitement spreads and deepens. They meet the asses by the way. It is the colt, the one upon which no man yet had sat, that Jesus chooses. They cast their garments on it, and set him thereon. They hail him as their Messiah, their King. He does now what he never so fully did before: he accepts the title, he receives the homage. All is true, then, that they had been thinking and hoping. It is openly and avowedly as Christ their king that he is about to go into Jerusalem.

Then let all the honors that they can give him be bestowed. It is but little of outward pomp or splendor they can throw around this regal procession. They cannot turn the narrow mountain path into a broad and covered roadway for their king, but they can strip off their outer garments, and cast them as a carpet beneath his feet. They can cut down leafy branches from the olive-trees and strew them in his way. Royal standards they have none to carry, they have no emblazoned flags of victory to wave. No choice instruments of music are here, through which practised lips may pour the swelling notes of joy and triumph, but they can pluck the palm-tree branches (nature's own emblems of victory) and wave them over his head, and they can raise their voices in hosannas round him. He allows all this, receives it all as seemly and due. The spirit of exultation and of triumph expands under the liberty and sanction thus given. Swelling in numbers, freer and more animated in its expressions, the procession moves on till the ridge of the hill is gained, and the city begins to open to the view. The mighty multitude breaks out into acclamations of praise; those going before and those following after vie with one another, and fill the air with their hosannas—applying to Jesus, and this entry into Jerusalem, passages that all understood to relate to the Messiah. 'Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; hosanna in the highest; blessed be the King, and blessed be the kingdom of our father David; peace in heaven and glory in the highest.' Some Pharisees who are looking on and listening press through the crowd, and speaking to Jesus as one who must know and feel how misplaced and how perilous his public acceptance of such homage as this must be, would have him stop it. 'Master,' they say to him, 'rebuke thy disciples.' 'I tell you,' is his reply, 'that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.'



Down the sloping path the procession moves. A ledge of rock is reached, looking from which across the valley of the Kedron the whole city lies spread out before the Saviour's eye.\* The sight arrests him; the procession stops. All around is light and joy and triumph. But a dark shadow falls upon the Saviour's countenance. His eyes fill with tears. He beholds the city, and he weeps over it. Another Jerusalem than the one sitting there at ease, clothed in holiday attire, busied with its Passover preparations, is before his eye—a Jerusalem beset, beleaguered, crouching in fear and terror, doomed to a terrible destruction. How little power has the present over the mind and heart of Jesus! What cares he for this adulation of the multitude, this parade of praise? Even had it all been genuine, all the outburst of an intelligent faith, an enthusiastic attachment to him in his true character and office, it had not checked the current of thought and feeling within the Saviour's heart. But he knows how hollow it all is, how soon it will all die away. He thinks of the future; but of what future? Why was it not the future of the next few days? Why did the scenes that were then before him not call up that future? There before him lay the garden of Gethsemane; there, across the valley, outside the city walls, the hill of Calvary; there, in the midst of the lofty buildings that crowned the heights of Zion and Moriah, rose the dwelling of the high priest and the palace of Herod; and he who is now looking upon these places knows well that before another Sabbath dawns he will be lying in agony in that garden, that beneath these roofs he will be jeered at and spit upon, and mock emblems of royalty forced upon him—the sentence of condemnation ratified by the fiendish cries of the city multitude: 'Away, away with him! crucify, crucify him!' and that there, upon the hill of Calvary, he will have to die the death of the cross. It had been no disparagement to the humanity of Jesus had the sights then before his eyes brought up before his thoughts the sufferings and the death with which so soon they were to be associated. But there is a higher reach of self-forgetfulness here than that of deadness or indifference to the acclamations of the surrounding multitudes. Jesus puts aside the prospect of his own endurances, though so near and so dark. He looks over and beyond them. Without naming the city, yet, by some glance of the eye or motion of the hand making clear the reference of his words as he stands weeping, he exclaims: 'If *thou* hadst known, even *thou*, thou upon whom for so many ages so much of the divine goodness has been lavished, whose gates the Lord has loved more than all the dwellings of Jacob, within whose

\* See Dr. Stanley's *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 191.

holy temple for so many generations the smoking altar and the bleeding sacrifice without, and the gleaming light of the Shekinah within, have spoken of a God there waiting to be gracious—if thou, even thou, with all thy crowded sins upon thee, thy stoning of the prophets and casting forth of those that were sent to thee—if thou at least, at last, in this thy day, when, all his other messengers rejected, the Father has sent forth his own Son to thee, saying, Surely they will reverence my Son—if thou in thy day hadst known the things belonging to thy peace spoken so often, so earnestly by him.’

‘If thou hadst but known.’ The sentence is cut short. For a moment the bright vision rises of all that Jerusalem might have been had she but known the time of her visitation. Had she but owned and welcomed her Messiah when he came, then might she have sat as a queen among all the cities of the earth. And he whom she honored would have honored her so as to cast all her former glory into the shade. Then, without her hands being steeped in the wickedness of the deed, or any hands of wickedness being employed to do it, some fit altar might have been found or reared, and in sight, not of mocking enemies, but adoring friends, might the great sacrifice have been offered up; and from Jerusalem, as from the centre of the great Christian commonwealth, might the tidings of the completed redemption have gone forth, and unto her all the glory and the honor of the nations might have been brought. All this, and more, might have been in that bright vision which for a moment rises before the Saviour’s eye. But quickly the vision disappears; gives place to one, alas! how different. ‘But now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days will come that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in, on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.’

The pause, the tears, the lament over the doomed city, must have produced a deep impression on those around. How little could they understand the meaning of what Christ said, or the source of the emotion he displayed. One thing was clearly shown: the absence of all anticipation on the part of Jesus of any present individual success and triumph. There was much in the manner of his reception, in the plaudits with which he was hailed, in the popular enthusiasm that had found for itself such a vent, to have impelled a mere political adventurer to take advantage of the occasion, and put himself at the head of a great national movement. How easy had it been for Jesus, had he gone in with the false ideas and expectations of the

thousands then congregated in and about Jerusalem, to have got himself recognized as their leader, and to have created a commotion which there were no means at hand to allay! His thoughts are far otherwise occupied. A sublime compassion fills his spirit, draws forth his tears, and prompts those pathetic lamentations.

We are not told what effect this strange interruption of the triumphal march produced. It must have done something to subdue the ardor, to quiet the demonstrations of the crowd. The procession, however, after the momentary pause, moves on; the hosannas abated, it may have been, but still continued. They go down into the valley, they cross the Kedron, they climb the heights on which the city stood, they enter into the nearest gate. The whole city is moved. The great bulk of the town population look askance upon this singular spectacle, far less acquainted with and less interested in Jesus than the strangers from the country.

‘Who is this?’ they say, as they see Jesus in the centre of the excited multitude; ‘and what can all this mean?’ They are told by those taking part in the procession: ‘This is Jesus, the prophet, of Nazareth of Galilee.’ How they received the intelligence we do not know; with something of wonder we may believe, and not a little of incredulity and dislike. The movement, however, is too deep and too extensive for any instant questioning of its character or interruption of its progress. The authorities, taken in all likelihood by surprise, do not interfere. Jesus goes up into the temple, looks round upon all things that he saw there, and, the eventide being now come, (Mark 11:11,) he turns, retraces his steps, and retires, we know not how attended, to the quiet home at Bethany.

Upon the triumphal procession into the city, especially upon the tears which Jesus shed and the lamentation that he poured over Jerusalem, let us offer one or two remarks.

1. How clear the proof here given of our Lord’s intimate foreknowledge of all that was afterwards to occur! Any one might have ventured on a prediction, grounding it upon what he knew of the existing relationships between the Roman power and the Jewish community, that a collision was imminent, that in that collision the weaker party would be conquered, and Jerusalem should fall; but who save he to whom the future was as the present could have spoken as Jesus did of the days when the enemy should cast a trench, and raise a mound, and compass it round, and keep it in on every side?

Josephus tells us how to the very letter all this was fulfilled—how at an early stage of the four months’ siege, Titus, the Roman general in command, summoned a council of war, at which three plans were

discussed: to storm the city, or to repair and rebuild the engines that had been destroyed, or to blockade the city and starve it into surrender. The third was the method adopted, and by incredible labor, the whole army engaging in the work, a wall was raised, which compassed the city round and round, and hemmed it in on every side.

2. A fresh mysterious awe attaches to the tears of Jesus shed thus beforehand over Jerusalem, as we think that they were shed by him whose own hand inflicted the judgment over which he lamented. In this aspect these tears are typical, and have been rightly taken as representative and expressive of the emotion with which Christ contemplates the great spiritual catastrophe of the ruin of lost souls. It might have been otherwise than it was with the doomed city. Had it been utterly impossible for her to have averted that calamity, had that impossibility been due, as it must have been had it existed, to Christ's own ordinance, there had been hypocrisy in his tears, in his weeping over the calamity as if it had been a curse drawn down by Jerusalem upon herself by her own acts and deeds. But the alternative had been set before the city; the things belonging to her peace had been revealed; she might have known them; it was her own fault she did not; had she known, the terrible fate had not befallen her. So it is with every lost spirit of our race. The things belonging to our peace with God have been made clearly known and openly set before us. They are ours in offer; if we will, they may be ours in possession. There is no outward hinderance, no invincible obstacle whatever to our entering into that peace, nothing but our own unwillingness to be saved as Jesus desires to save us. If any of us perish, over us the Saviour shall weep as over those who have been the instruments of their own ruin.

How impressively too are we here taught that the day of grace, the opportunity of return to and reconciliation with God, has its fixed limits, narrower often than the day of life. Apparently Jerusalem's day of grace extended for years beyond the time when he uttered the words of doom, and let fall the tears of sympathy. Miracles were wrought in her streets, exhortations and remonstrances addressed to her children; but to that all-seeing eye before which the secret things of God's spiritual kingdom lie open, the things belonging to her peace were from that time hid from her eyes. The door was shut, the doom was sealed. A like event happened of old to Esau when he sold his birthright. That was the point of doom in his career, and having passed it he found no place for repentance, for changing the divine purpose regarding him, though he sought it carefully with tears. A like event happened to ancient Israel on her exodus from



Egypt. The time of trial as to whether an entrance should be ministered into the land of promise closed at her first approach to the borders of Palestine; closed when the Lord swore in his wrath that she should not enter into that rest. A like event may happen in the moral and spiritual history of any man. God's Spirit will not always strive with ours. The time may come when the awful words will pass from the lips of the righteous Judge, "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone;"—and Providence will let the man alone; and the Word of God will let the man alone; and his own conscience will let the man alone; and the Spirit of all grace will let the man alone. It is not for us to usurp the prerogative of the Omniscient. It is not for us to affirm of any one, let his character and conduct be what they may, that he has reached or passed the mysterious point beyond which that comes true. It is not for any one to pass such sentence upon himself. But let all of us stand upon our guard, and reflect that if for months or years we have been growing colder, deader, more indifferent to spiritual things, to the unseen and eternal realities; if conscience has been gradually losing her hold and weakening in her power; if we can listen now unmoved to what once would have impressed and affected us; if we court and dally with temptations that once we would have shunned; if sins are lightly committed which once we would have shrunk from; by these and such like marks, it is apparent that our day of grace has been declining, the shadows of its evening have been lengthening out, and that if no change occur, if this course of things go on long, ere the sun of our natural existence go down, the sun of our spiritual day may have set, never to rise again.

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## II.

### THE FIG-TREE WITHERING AWAY—THE SECOND CLEAN- ING OF THE TEMPLE.\*

#### MONDAY.

SPEAKING generally of the days and nights of the memorable week which preceded his crucifixion, St. Luke tells us that Jesu "in the daytime was teaching in the temple, and at night he went out and abode in the mount that is called the Mount of Olives." Luk 21:37. The other evangelists speak of his going out at eventide to Bethany, to lodge there. Some of the nights may have been spent in the village

\* Matt. 21:12-17; Mark 11:12-19; Luke 19:45-48; John 12:19.

home; some outside in the olive gardens. If the night which succeeded his triumphal entry into the city was spent in the latter way, it may have been in solitude, in sleeplessness, in fasting, and in prayer, that its silent watches passed. And this would explain to us the circumstance, otherwise obscure, that next morning as he returned into the city Jesus was hungry. In this condition, he saw at some distance before him, by the wayside, a fig-tree covered with leaves. It is the peculiar nature of this tree that ordinarily its fruit appears before its leaves. Showing, as it did, such profusion of leaf, the fig-tree on which the eye of Jesus rested should have had some fruit hanging on its branches. But when he came up to it, it had none. Was Christ then deceived and disappointed? Did he not know before he approached the tree that no fruit would be found upon it? If he did know, should he have appeared to cherish an expectation which he did not really entertain? In answer to these and many kindred questions which may be raised regarding the incident, it is enough to say that in his whole dealing with the fig-tree by the wayside, Jesus meant, not to speak, but to enact a parable. In such acting, the letter may, and in many instances must be false, that the spirit and meaning may be truly and fully exhibited. Here is a tree which by its show of leaves gives promise that it has fruit upon it. Nay more, here is a tree which steps out in advance of all its fellows—for the time of figs, the ordinary season for that fruit ripening in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, has not yet come; here is a tree which, by the very prematurity and advanced condition of its foliage, tempts the traveller to believe that he will find there the first ripe figs of the season. It is as an ordinary traveller that Jesus approaches it, and when he finds that it has by its barrenness not only sinned against the laws of its species, and failed to profit by the advantages it has enjoyed, but in its early foliage made such a boastful and deceitful show of precedence and superiority above its neighbors, he seizes upon it as one of the fittest emblems he can find of that land and people so highly favored, for which the Great Husbandman had done so much which had set itself out before all other lands and peoples, and made so large yet so deceitful a profession of allegiance to the Most High. In his treatment of this tree, Jesus would symbolize and shadow forth the doom that the making and the falsifying of these professions has drawn down upon Israel. It was in mercy that in dumb prophetic show he chose to represent this doom in a calamity visited upon a senseless tree rather than upon a human agent. He might have taken one or more of the men of whom this tree was but a type, and in some terrible catastrophe inflicted upon them have prefigured

the fate of their countrymen. Or he might, as he had done not long before, when pointing to the heavy judgments impending over Judea, have taken actual instances of human suffering, such as that of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, or of the eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and employed them as emblems of the like destruction in reserve for the impenitent. Upon the very occasion now alluded to, when the first hint or obscure prophecy was given of the kind of ruin coming upon Judea, he had spoken a parable in which he had used a fig-tree as an emblem of Israel—a fruitless fig-tree, for which a period of respite had been solicited and obtained, for which year after year everything had been done, by digging about it and dunging it, that skill and care could suggest. That parable, however, had stopped at a very critical point. The intercession had prevailed. The barren fig-tree was to be allowed to stand, another year of trial was to be given to it. We may assume that all which the dresser of the vineyard promised would be done; but the issue is not revealed. The curtain drops as the fourth year begins. What happened at its close is left uncertain. After all this care and culture the barren fig-tree might remain barren still, and the sentence, “Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?” come to be executed upon it. Whether it was actually to be so or not the parable did not reveal. But now this actual fig-tree of the wayside, found so full of leaf though so empty of fruit, is taken, even as the fig-tree of the parable to represent impenitent Israel, and in his treatment of it Jesus takes up, carries on, and completes the parable, telling what it left untold. Looking at Christ’s act and deed in this light, as at once symbolic and prophetic, as stretching in its significance beyond ancient Israel, and embracing an exhibition of the result of profession without practice, show without substance in religion, let us ask ourselves upon what ground was it that our Lord’s cursing of the tree was grounded, and in what did that curse consist?

The tree is condemned solely for its barrenness. It is not said of it that it showed a sickly, dwarfed, or stunted growth. It may have stood as fair and goodly a tree to look upon as any fig-tree around Jerusalem, offering as inviting an object to the traveller’s eye, furnishing in outspread branches and broad green leaves as refreshing a shade. But whatever its other qualities, either for use or for ornament, it wanted this one—it did not bear fruit. That was its fatal defect, and for that one defect the blighting words were spoken against it, and it died. The tree had failed in its first and highest office. A fig-tree is created that it may bear figs. That is its pecu-

liar function in the physical creation, and if it fail in performing this function, it forfeits its place in that creation, it incurs the penalty of removal, it may righteously be treated as a cumberer of the earth. We men have been created that, by being, doing, enduring what God requires us to be and to do and to endure, we may bear some fruit unto him, some fruit of that kind which can be laid up in the eternal garner. That is our allotted function in the spiritual creation, and if it remain undischarged, then by us also is our place in that creation forfeited. In our natural barrenness and unfruitfulness towards God a gracious intercessor has been found; by him for us a period of respite has been obtained, a period in which many a gracious ministry of his providence and Spirit is operating upon us. Long and sadly may we have failed in fulfilling the great end of our creation, yet if we will but yield ourselves to these kindly and gracious influences that the Redeemer of our souls is so ready to exert, the place that we had forfeited may still be ours, seasons of richer fruitfulness may be before us on earth, and a long summer-tide of endless joy beyond. But if we fail, if we resist these influences, if we still remain barren before God, it will avail us little that we plead the harmlessness of our lives, the gentleness, the goodness, the generosity of our dispositions and conduct towards our fellow-men. Like the barren fig-tree of the wayside we stand, with much, it may be, of beauty, much of outward show, many an amiable quality in us to win human love, not without use either, contributing largely to the happiness of others, but barren towards God, fruitless in the eye of Christ, open to the doom that we may force him to pronounce and execute.

And what is that doom, as shadowed forth in the symbolic incident that we have now before us? Jesus does nothing to the barren fig-tree. No outward ministry of wrath is here employed; no axe is laid at the root of the tree; no whirlwind blast from the wilderness strips it of its leaves; no lightning-stroke from heaven is commissioned to split its solid trunk, and scorch and wither up its fruitless branches. The doom pronounced is simply this: "Let no man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever." The curse laid upon it was that of perpetual barrenness. For the execution of that curse it was not necessary that any kind of violence should be done to it; but it was physically necessary that all those material agencies needed to make it a fruit-bearing tree, which had so long and so unavailing been operating, should now cease to act. This actually takes place. The sentence passes from the lips of Jesus: "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever." His ministering servants hear and hasten



to carry the sentence into execution. The earth hears and yields no more nourishment to those roots; light and air, they hear and withhold from them their genial influences; the rain may fall, the dew may settle upon those branches, but not to recruit or re-invigorate. It had not profited by them as it should, and now there is taken away from it even that which it had. Poor solitary forsaken tree, cut off by that fiat of heaven from all the supports of life and growth! See how from that moment the glossy green of the spring leaves grows dull; the branches begin to droop; the bark to crack; the whole tree to shrink and shrivel up, till next morning the passers-by see it dried up from the very roots!

And should the great Creator desire to deal with any barren human spirit as he dealt with that barren fig-tree, what has he to do in order to punish it for its barrenness? He does not need to come forth out of his place to avenge the injury done to his great name. He does not need to grasp any instrument of vengeance, or inflict with it a single stroke; no bolt of wrath need be hurled from above, nor any hell from beneath be moved to draw the guilty spirit down into its eddying fires. No; all that God has to do is simply to pass the same doom executed upon the fig-tree. He has but to desert that spirit, to say, "Arise, let us go hence," and call away after him as he goes all those powers and influences that had been at work there so long and so fruitlessly, to leave it so absolutely and wholly, finally and for ever, to itself. Poor solitary forsaken spirit, cut off from God, and cast adrift upon a wild and shoreless sea, with thine own vulture passions in thee, let loose from all restraint, to turn upon thee and torture thee, and prey upon thee for ever! What darker, drearier hell than that? The soul breeding within it the worm that never dies; itself kindling the fire it cannot quench.

The sentence against the fig-tree pronounced, the elements having got from their Creator the commission to execute it, which they were not slow to do, Jesus passes on into the city and up into the temple. He had on the preceding evening merely looked around on all that was to be seen. It was the day (the tenth of the month Nisan) on which, according to the old command, the Jews were solemnly to set apart the paschal lamb for the coming sacrifice. And Christ's object may then have simply been to present himself as the true Lamb of God, set apart from the beginning, who four days thereafter was to offer up himself in the sacrifice of the cross. At the time of that short evening visit all may have been comparatively quiet within the temple. But now, as at an early hour he enters the court of the Gentiles, the same sights are before him that met his eyes and stirred

his spirit three years before: the bustle of a great traffic, of buyers and sellers, and money-changers, all busily engaged. In reproof of such desecration, in assertion of his divine dignity and power as the Son coming to his Father's house, with full authority to dispose of all things there as he pleased, he had at the beginning of his ministry cleansed the temple, cast out the traffickers, overturned the tables of the money-changers—with little or no effect as it would seem, for now all the abuses are restored. The hand of the cleanser is as much needed as ever, and it is once more put forth as vigorously, perhaps more so than before, for we detect increase of sternness both in word and deed on this occasion. But why the repetition of the act? Why begin and close the ministry in Jerusalem with such cleansing of the temple? Though we could give no other answer to such a question, we should be satisfied with regarding this as one of the many instances in which Jesus repeated himself as he did both in speech and in action. He knew the nature on which he desired to operate. He knew how difficult it is to fix even the simplest ideas, not connected with the outward world of sense and action, in the minds and hearts of the great mass of mankind. He knew that however good the instruments might be that are used to do this, (and he chose the simplest and the best,) to make the impression deep and lasting the stroke must be oft repeated; the same truth told in the same words, or illustrated by the same emblems, or symbolized by the same acts. In the gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark more than a dozen instances occur of the same discourses redelivered with scarcely any variation in the phraseology; and we may warrantably conclude that this happened far more frequently in the actual ministry of Jesus than now appears upon the face of the record. It was the same with the miracles as with the teachings of our Saviour. Twice he fed many thousands on the hillside, and twice upon the lake miraculous draughts of fishes were taken. It was in harmony with the method thus so often followed, that at the commencement and at the close of his labors in Judea, within the courts of the temple, in presence of the priests and the rulers, he asserted by a bold and authoritative act his prophetic and Messianic character, his true and proper Sonship to the Father. In the latter case we can see a peculiar propriety in his having done so. The day before, he had made his appeal to the people. In language borrowed from ancient prophecy, and known by all to apply to Christ their coming king, they had hailed him as their Messiah, and in his acceptance of their homage he had publicly appropriated to himself the Messianic office. It remained that he should make a like appeal to the priesthood,

calling on them to recognize him as holding that high office. He did so the next day in the temple. It was the first thing he did on entering the holy place. This was the way in which he began that brief ministry within its courts, in which his earthly labors were to close. He knew beforehand how fruitless it would be; but nevertheless the sign and token of who it was that was among them must be given.

The second cleansing of the courts of the temple appears to have taken the custodians of the holy place as much by surprise as did the first. They made no attempt to interrupt it, nor did they interfere with Jesus in the use to which he turned the courts that he had cleansed. For he did not retire after the purification was accomplished. He remained to keep guard over the place from which the defilement had been removed, not suffering any man to carry even a common vessel across the court, which the Jews had turned into a common city thoroughfare. He remained for hours to occupy it unchallenged; the people flocked into it, and he taught them there. They were all, we are told, very attentive to hear him, and they were astonished at his doctrine—the citizens who had never heard him teach so before, and the Galileans, to whom the doctrine indeed was not new, but who wondered afresh to hear it spoken under the shadow of the holy place. And the teaching had its usual accompaniment: “The blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them” there. Matt. 21:14. He had wrought many miracles before in Jerusalem, but never here and thus; never within the walls of the sanctuary; never in such a public and solemn manner, as direct attestations of his asserted kingly dignity and power. For hours he had the large outer court of the Gentiles at his command, and this was the manner in which the time and the place were employed. What a change from the morning to the forenoon occupation; from the crowding, and the jostling, and the bargaining, and the driving to and fro of cattle, to the silent multitude hanging upon the lips of the great Speaker, or watching as one and another of the lame and the blind are brought to him to be healed! But where all this while are the priests and the Levites, the rulers and the temple guard? They are looking on bewildered, their earlier antipathy kindled into a tenfold fervor of hate. The closer to them he comes, the more distinctively and forcibly he presses upon them the evidences of his Messiahship, it convinces them the more what a dangerous man he is, how utterly impossible it is that he can be any longer tolerated or suffered to act in such a bold, presumptuous, defiant style, the resolution they had already formed to destroy him taking firmer hold of them than ever. For the moment, however, they fear

both him and the people: Mark 11:18; Luke 19:48; his conduct in braving them within their own stronghold is so unlike anything that they had ever fancied he would dare to do, the current of popular feeling runs so strongly in his favor. - Not that there was much outward demonstration of this feeling. It had expended itself the day before in the triumphal procession without the city gates, where all felt more at liberty. Within the area of the temple, and under those searching, frowning looks of the scribes and the chief priests, the breath of the people is abated. Thinking of the strange tears and lamentations over the capital, of all they see and hear within the temple, something of doubt and uncertainty, of awe and fear, has been stealing over the spirits of the ignorant multitude, which restrains them from any marked or vehement expressions of attachment. But there are little children among them who had taken part in yesterday's procession, within whose ears its hosannas are still ringing. These feel no such restraint, and in the joyous ardor of the hour and scene, they lift up their voices and fill the courts of the temple with the cry, "Hosanna to the Son of David." This is more than the chief priests and scribes can bear. In their displeasure they appeal to Christ himself, saying, "Hearest thou what they say?" wishing him, as their allies had done the day before, to stop praises, in their ears so profane, so blasphemous. All the answer that they get is a sentence applicable to all praise that comes from the lips of childhood, cited from a psalm which is throughout a prophecy of himself, a proclamation of the excellency of his name and kingdom over all the earth: "Have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" Pleasant ever to the eye of Jesus was childhood with its charm of freshness, simplicity, buoyant freedom and open ardent love and trust, and sweet ever to his ear the strains of juvenile devotion, but never so pleasant as when he saw these bands of children clustering round him in the temple; never so sweet as when—no others left to do it—they lifted up their youthful voices in those hosannas, the last accents of earthly praise that fell upon his ear.

At the rebuke and the quotation, the baffled scribes and high priests retire, to do no more that day in the way of interruption; retire to mature their plans, to wait for the morrow, and see what it will bring forth. So closed the last day but one of the active ministry of Jesus.



## III

THE BARREN FIG-TREE—PARABLES OF THE TWO SONS  
AND OF THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN.\*

## TUESDAY.

It was early on the morning of Monday, the second day of the Passion week, that Jesus pronounced the doom upon the fig-tree. The sentence took immediate effect: "Presently the fig-tree withered away." Matt. 21:19. The withering, however, was not so instantaneous and complete as to attract at the moment the attention of the disciples, or the shades of evening may have wrapped the tree from their sight as they went out to the Mount of Olives. Next morning, however, returning into the city by the same path they had taken the day before, they came to the tree, looked at it, and saw that it was "dried up from the roots." Mark 11:20. Jesus himself seems scarcely to notice it, is about to pass it by. The ready spokesman, Peter, calls his attention to it, and says, "Master, behold, the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away." It is simple wonder, and nothing more; wonder at the power by which such an effect had been accomplished, which breaks out in this expression of the apostle. And he is the faithful representative of the state of feeling in the breasts of his brethren. They manifest no curiosity, at least make no inquiry as to the spiritual meaning of the incident. Their thoughts are engrossed with the singularity of the occurrence, that by a simple word spoken, without any external agency employed, so large a tree, in full leaf, should, within twenty-four hours, have shrunk up from its very roots, and should now stand before them a leafless, shrivelled, lifeless thing. Had they been in a different frame of mind, had they been wondering, not how, but why so strange a thing was done, Jesus might have spoken to them otherwise than he did. As it was, he graciously accommodates himself to the existing condition of their thoughts, by letting them know that his word had been a word of power, because a word of strong undoubting faith, such faith as they themselves might cherish. "And Jesus answering, saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe; it shall be done." In the early days of Christianity, the faith of the apostles

\* Mark 11:20-23; 12:1-12; Matt. 21:23-46; Luke 20:1-19.

was authorized and encouraged to take hold of the omnipotence of the Deity, and through it to work miracles. This kind of faith, in its absolute and perfect form, existed only in our Lord himself. To the power itself by which the miracles were to be wrought there was absolutely no limit, as there was none to that omnipotence which the faith was to appropriate and employ. But in actual exercise the power was to be proportioned to the faith. It was to be according to their faith that it was to be done by them, as well as in them. We accept it then as true to its whole extent, that at that time, and as to these men, there was no miracle of power needful or useful for the furtherance of their apostolic work, which their faith, had it been perfect, might not have enabled them to accomplish. Of course we understand that that would not have been a true or intelligent faith in God which desired simply to make trial of its strength, independently of the purpose for which the power was exercised. We put aside, therefore, as quite frivolous and out of place, such a question as this: Could St. Peter or St. Paul, when their faith was strongest, have cast a mountain into the sea, or plucked up a sycamore-tree by the roots? Whatever God saw was meet to be done, the power to do that was given; and so to the very shadow of the one, and to part of the dress of the other, a wonderful efficacy was once attached. But they and all these early Christians were to know that the gift of working wonders, which sat for a season like a crown of glory upon the brow of the infant church, was not to be idly and indiscriminately employed, and was ever to be reckoned as of inferior value in God's sight to those inward graces of the soul, in which true likeness to and fellowship with God consist. Thus it is that from speaking of faith as putting itself forth in the working of miracles, Jesus proceeds to speak of it as expressing the desires of the heart to God in prayer: "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." The last words are the same that he had used in the Sermon on the Mount. Comparing the two cases, however, there is something more striking in the parallel than the simple repetition of the same words. It was after his having spoken for the first time the prayer that goes by his name, that at the close—as if the one petition, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," had been dwelling upon his mind, and he desired to recur to it, so as to press home upon their hearts

the duty of forgiving others—that before passing on to another subject of his discourse, he said: “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” Matt. 6:14, 15. So is it here. He cannot speak of the large and limitless influence of prayer without recurring to the same idea, expressing and enforcing it in the same words. Why have the two—our forgiving others, and being ourselves forgiven—been linked thus together in such close and singular conjunction? Not that there is any other ground of the divine forgiveness than the free mercy of our God in Christ; not that by pardoning others we purchase the pardon of Jehovah; but that the connection between the two is so constant, fixed, invariable, that neither can you ever find the humble, broken, contrite heart, which sues for mercy at the throne of grace, without finding there also the meek and gentle spirit that goes forth forgivingly towards others; nor do you ever meet with such free, full, generous forgiveness of others, as from those who have themselves partaken of the pardoning grace of God. He who has been forgiven that great debt, the ten thousand talents, how can he refuse to forgive the hundred pence?

The words about forgiveness were spoken in the presence of the withered fig-tree. The same mysterious power, which had in this one instance been put forth to blast and to destroy, was to be conveyed to the disciples. May it not in part have been to warn them that it was in no wrathful spirit, for no malignant or destructive purposes, that it was to be wielded by them—that in such emphatic terms they were reminded that it must ever be in a meek forgiving spirit that they should sue for the aid of the heavenly power?

The short conversation by the wayside over the walk into the city is resumed, and the temple courts are reached, already filled, though it was yet early, with eager expectant crowds. Before beginning his work of teaching and of healing, Jesus is walking leisurely through the courts, calmly surveying all around, looking perhaps, to see what effect his act of the preceding day has had in the way of removing the profanations of the place.

The Sanhedrim has met, a consultation has been held, it has been resolved that as a preliminary step he shall be challenged, and forced to produce and authenticate his credentials.

“As he was walking in the temple, there came to him the chief priests and the scribes and the elders;” the three great bodies out of whom the highest council of the Jews was constituted. It is a formal deputation, in all likelihood, from this council, which now

approaches and accosts him. Their question seems a fit and fair one. They are the constituted keepers of the temple, of the only public building of the city that the Romans have left entirely under Jewish control. There has been a manifest invasion of the territory committed to their guardianship, of the offices that they alone are held competent to discharge; for who is this that, being neither priest nor Levite, nor scribe nor elder, deals with the sacred place as if it were his own? Nothing at first sight more proper or pertinent than that they should come to one acting in such a way as Jesus had done the day before, and say to him, "By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?" We remember, however, that three years before Jesus had acted in the same way within the precincts of the temple, and that the same men had then accosted him in the same manner. Their question then indeed had been somewhat different from what it is now: "What sign showest thou, seeing thou doest these things?" Since then, sign after sign had been given, miracle after miracle had been wrought, proof after proof of his Messiahship had been presented. They had refused to listen and be convinced; had turned all the multiplied evidence aside, and dealt with it as if it were of no weight. And now, at the close of a period teeming throughout with answers to their first challenge, they addressed him as if for the first time the question as to what and who he was had to be raised. They do not, indeed, now ask for signs; they must have other vouchers. They must probe to the bottom the pretensions of this bold invader of their temple, and draw out from him what they fondly hope will give them sufficient ground legally to condemn him. They frame their queries well. They first ask about the authority under which he acts. They know that no authority but one, that of God himself, could sanction the procedure of the Galilean. He may plead that authority; but his own bare claiming it will not suffice—he must display his title to the possession of this authority, must tell who gave it to him. Looking at the motives by which they were actuated and the sinister objects they had in view—considering, too, how full and varied were the materials already in their hands for answering their inquiry, Jesus might have kept silence and refused to answer. He does not do this: he gives indeed no direct or categorical reply; but it would be wrong to say that he cleverly or artfully evades the question they put to him by asking them another upon a quite different subject; that he suspends his reply to them on theirs to his, so that, out of their refusal to answer, he may construct a defence of his own silence. It was not as a mere evasion of a captious



challenge, as a mere method of stopping the mouths of the challengers, that "Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things: The baptism of John, was it from heaven? or of men? answer me." Jesus refers to the baptism of John as containing within itself a sufficient reply to their inquiries. If they acknowledged it as divine, they must also recognize his authority as divine; for John had openly and repeatedly pointed to him as the Messiah, the greater than he, whose shoe-latchet he was not worthy to unloose. First, then, he must have from them a confession as to the true character of the Baptist's ministry. This they are unprepared to give. Though really and in their hearts rejecting it, they had never openly discredited John's claim to be a prophet sent by God. They had managed to keep the people in ignorance of what they thought. They had not needed to interfere to check the career of the Baptist. Herod had done their work for them in his case. John had been removed, and they were willing enough it should be thought that they participated in the popular belief. They felt at once the difficulty of the dilemma in which the question of Jesus involved them. Should they say, as was naturally to be expected they should, that John's baptism was from heaven, Jesus would have it in his power to say, 'Why then did ye not believe him when he testified of me? If he was from heaven then so am I, my ministry and his being so wrapped together, that together they stand or together they fall.' Such was the instant use to which Jesus could turn a present acknowledgment on their part of the divine origin and authority of the Baptist's ministry, convicting them at once of the plainest and grossest inconsistency. They were not prepared to stand convicted of this in presence of the people, now stirred to intense anxiety as they watched the progress of this collision. But as little were they prepared to face the storm that they would raise by an open denial of the heavenly origin of the Baptist's mission; and so to Christ's pointed interrogation, their only answer, after reasoning among themselves, is, "We cannot tell." It was false; they could at least have told what they themselves believed. They could, but dared not; and so by this piece of cowardice and hypocrisy they forfeit the title to have any other or fuller satisfaction given them as to the nature and origin of that authority which Jesus exercised, beyond that which was already in their hands. "And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things." Mark 11:33.

Scarcely prepared for having the tables turned so quickly and

thoroughly upon them, the scribes and chief priests and elders stand crestfallen before the Lord. He has them now in hand, nor will he lose the last opportunity of telling them what they are, and what he knows they have resolved to do. About to pronounce over them his fearful anathemas, when all the word-battles of this troubled day are over, he will force them now beforehand to spread out with their own hands the grounds upon which those anathemas were to rest. Out of their own mouths will he condemn them. This is done by a skilful use of parable; the same kind of use that Nathan made of it when he got David to judge and condemn his own conduct. "But what think ye?" says Jesus to them, as if he were introducing a wholly new topic: "A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not; but afterwards he repented, and went. He came to the second, and said likewise; and he answered and said, I go, sir; but went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father?" Little suspecting the real drift of this short and simple story, and rather relieved than otherwise by the question, as getting them out of their embarrassment and covering their fall, they say unto him at once, "The first;" the one who said he would not, yet who went. Then came the moral and application of the tale: "Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward that ye might believe him." It was the treatment given to John and to his ministry that Jesus had been setting forth in the conduct of the two sons to their father. They, the chief priests and elders of the people, were the second son; and those publicans and harlots, who repented at the preaching of the Baptist, were the first. It was bad enough to have the veil of hypocrisy behind which they had tried to screen themselves torn aside; to have their unbelief in the Baptist proclaimed upon the housetops. It was worse to have publicans and harlots preferred before them, the preference grounded upon their own verdict. But they have still more to hear, still more to bear. Jesus had been comparing them, to their great chagrin, with some of the lowest of their own times. His eye now takes a wider range. He looks back to the treatment which these men's forefathers had given to messenger after messenger of the Most High, and he looks forward to that which they, fit sons of such sires, were about to give himself; and bringing the past, the present, and the future into the picture, he

tells of a vineyard well fenced, well furnished, let out to husbandmen; of servant after servant sent to receive its fruits; of one of them being beaten, another stoned, another killed, till the owner of the vineyard having "one son, his well beloved," at last sends him, saying, "They will reverence my son." But the wicked husbandmen, when he comes, take and kill him, and cast him out of the vineyard. "What then," says Jesus, "shall the lord of the vineyard, when he cometh, do unto those husbandmen?" This question is addressed to the people, and not to the chief priests and scribes, to whom, as St. Luke (chap. 20:9) tells us, the parable was spoken; and they, not looking perhaps beyond the simple incidents of the tale, say, "He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard to others." But why are the chief priests and the elders forced, as unwillingly they are, to remain standing there in Christ's presence with a great crowd around them? what are they thinking of this second story? what will they now say? Scarcely has Christ begun to speak of the vineyard and its fence, and its wine-press, ere Isaiah's vineyard—a type, they knew, of the house of Israel—recurs to their memory; and as messenger after messenger is spoken of as despatched, what could those be but the prophets whom the Lord had sent unto their forefathers? Already a strong suspicion that this tale also is to be brought to bear against them has entered into their minds—a suspicion that is turned into a certainty as Christ proceeds to speak of the owner of the vineyard as a father having an only and well-beloved son, just such a son as Jesus had always claimed to be to God, and as he went on to represent the seizure and the death of that son, the very deed they already had resolved to do. In these husbandmen they see themselves; in their doom, whatever it may be, they see their own.

While the people, then, in ready answer to Christ's question, speak out the natural verdict of the unbiased conscience, and say, "He will destroy the husbandmen, and give the vineyard unto others," they, as they hear such a heavy sentence passed, almost involuntarily exclaim, "God forbid." Jesus looks at them as they utter this vehement disclaimer, and says: "What is this then that is written? Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?" Christ quotes here from the 118th Psalm, a psalm familiar to the Jews as pointing throughout to their Messiah; so familiar, that it was from it that those salutations were taken by which Christ on his entry into the city had been hailed by the common people two days before, as well

as those hosannas to the Son of David which the children had repeated the next day in the temple, the echoes of which must still have been ringing somewhat unpleasantly in the ears of the chief priests and the rulers. Jesus wishes by this quotation to carry on as it were the prophecy of the parable; to show what would be the doom inflicted upon the perpetrators of that dark deed, the murder of the Father's only and well-beloved Son. That Son was to be himself the infliker of this doom; but as he in the parable was dead, and could not be represented as a living agent, the image of the vineyard is dropped, and another is introduced, fitting in however with the other, the rejecters of the stone being the same with the husbandmen of the vineyard. The chief priests might have some little difficulty in seeing how it was that in speaking about the corner-stone Jesus was but carrying on the same history a step or two beyond the point at which the parable, by the necessity of its structure, had stopped. Any such difficulty was at once removed by Christ's dropping for a moment all allegory, all imagery: "Therefore I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Matt. 21:43. They can mistake no longer; the kingdom is to be taken from them; as the occupants of the vineyard, they are to be ejected. But is this all? does this exhaust their doom? What about that doom may this new image of the stone convey? "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall it will grind him to powder." First the stone is passive, suffering all kinds of rough usage to be heaped upon it, avenging itself the while for all the insults offered by causing those who offer them to stumble over it, and fall and be broken. But at last, as if invested with some inner living power, or as if lifted and wielded by some invisible but all-powerful hand, it becomes active, gets into motion, lifts itself up, and with a crushing weight descends upon its despisers and grinds them to powder. Such was Christ to that commonwealth of the Jews, to that proud theocracy of which the men before him were the head. By the Great Architect he had been laid of old in Zion, the chief foundation of the great spiritual edifice to be reared out of the ruins of the Fall. For many a generation he had been a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. All these wrongs of the past he passively had borne, and now in his own person he is to submit to reproach and suffering and death; but the hour that was to see him exalted because of this, and proclaimed to be the head of the corner, was to see him coming also in judgment. He was to arise out of his place; he was to pour contempt on his despisers; utter desolation was to



come upon the city and people of the Jews. The stone was to fall upon it, and it was in truth a very grinding of that land to powder, when every vestige of its ancient institutions was swept away, its people perished in multitudes, and the remnant, scattered over all the earth, was as the dust which the wind drives to and fro.

What Jesus was to the Jews, he is in a certain sense to all. Primarily and mainly, he is set before us as the one and only true and broad and firm foundation on which to build our hopes; a foundation open and easy of access, no guarding fence around it, so near that a single step is all that is needed to plant us on it, broad enough for all to stand upon, and firm enough to sustain the weight of the whole world's dependence. Such is Christ to all who go to him in humility, in simplicity, in child-like trust, resting upon him and upon him only for their forgiveness and acceptance with God. But such he may not be, he is not, to all. The very stone, so elect and precious to some, to others may be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. There before us all, in the broad highway of life, it lies. It will bear now unmoved and unprovoked any treatment that you may give. But it shall not remain so for ever; and woe to him who, having despised and rejected it all through life, shall see it darkening above his head, descending to crush. It were better for that man that he had never been born!

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#### IV.

### — THE MARRIAGE OF THE KING'S SON—QUESTION AS TO THE TRIBUTE-MONEY.\*

#### TUESDAY.

HAVING repelled the challenge to state and to produce the authority upon which he was acting, Jesus had addressed first to the challengers the parable of the two sons, and then to the people the parable of the wicked husbandmen. In both of these parables the conduct of his rejecters had been exposed, and the fate in store for them foretold. Yet another parable was added, intended to complete that picture of the future which Jesus would hold up before their eyes. This parable, the last addressed by our Lord to the people at large, was partly a repetition, partly an expansion

\* Matt. 22 : 1-22 ; Mark 12 : 13-17 ; Luke 20 : 20-26.

of the one delivered some time before in Peræa, on the occasion of an entertainment given to Christ by a chief Pharisee, and which is recorded in the 14th chapter of the Gospel of St. Luke. It is interesting to notice the differences between the two, corresponding so accurately, as they do, with the differences of time and circumstances under which they were spoken. When the first was uttered, the hostility of the hierarchy, though deep and deadly, was latent. The certain man, therefore, who makes a supper, and sends out his servant to tell them that were bidden to come, for all things were now ready, has nothing more to complain of than that his messenger and his message were both treated with neglect. With more or less courteousness, more or less decision of purpose, more or less implied preference for other engagements, the invitation was refused. And the penalty visited upon this refusal was simply exclusion from the banquet. "For I say unto you that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper."

In the second parable, the guilt of the first invited guests is greater, the penalty more severe. The certain man who makes a feast becomes a king, invitations issuing from whom had all the character of commands. And it is for no common purpose that the royal banquet is prepared. It is for a great state occasion; to celebrate a great state event. Even therefore had the king's invitation met with no other or different reception from that given to the invitation of the householder, a much higher guilt had been involved in declining it; for a royal banquet made under such circumstances had something in it of a public or political character. To make light of an invitation to such a banquet, to plead any of the events or duties or engagements of ordinary life as a reason for declinature and absence, would not only be in the highest degree discourteous, it would have a taint of treason in it, an element of disloyalty and rebellion.

In the one case a single servant is sent forth, and when he tells the bidden guests to come, for all things are now ready, with one consent they begin to make excuse; but there is nothing of contempt or malignity displayed towards either the provider of the feast or the servant who bears the summons. There is an apparent desire to make out something like a good excuse. In the second parable the king sends out not one, but a band of servants, who meet with a flat refusal. Other servants are sent forth, not to punish, not to announce the king's purpose to exclude, but to renew the invitation—to entreat the refusers to reconsider their resolution. Some make light of it, treat this second invitation with even greater

disrespect than the first; while others are so provoked that they take the messengers, spitefully entreat them, and slay them. Is it wonderful that the wrath of the king should in consequence of this be so much greater than that of the simple householder; that he should treat the heavier offence with a deeper mark of displeasure than mere exclusion from his presence and his table? "He sends forth his armies and destroys these murderers, and burns up their city."

This bringing in of armies, this mention of a city and its destruction, at once calls up to our thoughts the ruin hovering over Jerusalem, and teaches us to connect the parable of the marriage-feast with that of the wicked husbandmen; both intended to set forth the terrible punishment of the Jewish people—the taking of the kingdom from them, and the giving it to others. In the closing part, however, of the latter parable—that which speaks of the new guests brought in from the highways, and the king coming in and detecting the man without the wedding-garment—it goes beyond the former; it points not to Jewish but to Christian times. And it should fix our attention all the more upon the closing section of the parable, that while in all the other teachings of our Lord during his last day in the temple, strict regard was had to the audience that was then before him—to the events that were so soon to transpire in Jerusalem and Judea—he casts here a prophetic glance upon the ages that were to succeed the fall of the Jewish theocracy—as if he could not pass away from his pre-intimation of the forfeiture of the kingdom by the sons of Abraham without warning those who were to be brought in to take their place, that a no less watchful eye would be upon them as they sat down at the provided banquet, that the badge of loyalty without and the spirit of true loyalty within would be required of all, and that the want of it would incur a penalty not less heavy than that visited on their predecessors, the chief priests, the scribes, the elders.

Their wrath at the speaker knew no bounds. They would have laid hold of him and borne him off to inflict the condign punishment that in their eyes he so fully merited. But they feared the people. They were not sure of the temper of the crowd by which they were surrounded, not sure how far they would be supported by the Roman authorities. Outwardly curbing, inwardly nursing their wrath, they withdraw to try another method. They have been baffled in the attempt openly to confront him; but could they not entangle him in his talk by some crafty questions, and force from him an answer that might supply material for accusation, "that so

they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor"? Luke 20:20. Leaving some of their underlings to watch him, so as to be ready to report all he says and does, they retire to hold a secret conclave. They call the Herodians into council, whom they find quite willing to combine with them in the execution of any plan that promised to prevail against the man whom they equally hate. The deliberation is brief. A step at once suggests itself that cannot but succeed, which, one way or other, is certain to damage, if not utterly to ruin, their common enemy. The chief priests, however, and scribes, and elders, the leading men who have just had that humiliating colloquy with him, will not go themselves to carry out this well-concocted scheme. They have had enough of personal collision. They will not venture again into his presence, to be taunted and maligned before the people. It is besides a very low and hypocritical piece of work that is to be done, and they commit it to other hands, who take with them some of these Herodians, to give the matter less of a purely Pharisaic character.

Having got their instructions, these emissaries approach Jesus, feigning themselves to be sincere men, bent upon ascertaining what their duty is. And when they come they say to him, "Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man, for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth"—a very insidious piece of flattery, a great part of its power lying in the apparent honesty with which the men who offer it embrace themselves among the number of those for whom they are sure that Jesus will not care; a kind of flattery consisting in attributing to the person flattered a superiority to flattery, to which, if well administered, our weak humanity is peculiarly susceptible. With this artful preface, which they hope will tempt him to speak boldly out the answer that may suit them, they say, "Master, is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give?" It is not the expediency but the lawfulness of paying the tribute exacted by the Romans, that they ask about. That lawfulness was denied by many who, under the force and pressure of necessity, yet paid the tax. The Pharisees themselves, who owed much of their power and popularity to their faithful adherence to the principles of the old Jewish theocracy, disputed the lawfulness of the exaction. They took their stand here upon a very plain declaration of Moses: "Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee whom the Lord thy God shall choose; one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother." Dent. 17:15. When



the Herodian family, one not of Jewish but of Idumean extraction, backed by the power of Rome, took possession of the throne of Judea, the entire Jewish Sanhedrim, appealing to this scripture, protested against what they rightly enough regarded as a violation of the Mosaic law. Their protest, however, was unavailing. The first two Herods were kept upon the throne by the Roman emperors, whose policy it then was through them to rule Judea. Ere long indeed, and this happened during our Saviour's life, the mask was dropped. The sovereignty of Judea was directly assumed by the Romans. One or other of its northern provinces was given to one of the Herods, who governed it under the title of tetrarch or king; but Judea proper was placed under a Roman procurator. Such a method of foreign rule was still more obnoxious to the Jewish people than the government of the Herods, who, though by descent Idumean, had by intermarriage with Jewish families won for themselves something like a Jewish title. It was the policy, and we have no doubt it was the honest principle of the Pharisees, secretly to foster the general and deep, but repressed and smouldering opposition to the Roman rule. Distinguished as a religious party for their extreme and punctilious attachment to the ceremonialism of the Jewish law, as a political party they won golden opinions of the people by standing in the vanguard as upholders of the national independence. Among the many political questions which the state of the country raised, was one about the payment of the poll-tax imposed by the foreign governors. Arguing from the premise that the whole foundation of the Roman authority was hollow, grounded on usurpation and incapable of defence, the leading political Pharisees vehemently denied the legality of the imposition. The Herodians, the defenders of the legitimacy of the Herodian dynasty, could not well deny the justice of the Roman claim to civil supremacy, as it had been by the Roman power that the dynasty which they supported had been instituted. Yet among them there were many who bore no good will to the Italian conquerors, and who looked to the rule of the Herods as the best protection against an entirely foreign domination—the best preservative of something like a separate and independent national existence. Such kind of Herodians perhaps they were who now associated themselves with the Pharisees in putting the question to Jesus—"Master, is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give?"

They think that they have shut him up; no door seems open to evade or to decline an answer. A simple affirmative or a simple



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negative must be given. On either side, the difficulty and the danger to Jesus seem nearly equal. If he shall say it is lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, his favor with the people is gone; his pretensions to be the Messiah are scattered to the winds; from being an object of attraction and attachment he becomes an object of alienation and contempt. Should he, on the other hand, say, as they fondly hope he will, that it is not lawful, the weapon is at once put into their hands which they can use against him with fatal effect. They have but to report him to Pilate as a stirrer-up of sedition, and prove their charge by his own declaration made in the presence of the people. But they are not prepared for the manner in which the insidious question is to be dealt with. "Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?" said Jesus; "show me a penny"—the coin in common circulation. There were two kinds of money at that time in use among the Jews—the Roman, by which all the common business of life was transacted, and in which the capitation-tax, about which the question that had been raised, was paid; and the old Jewish, still partially employed, and in which especially the temple tax was paid. They bring him one of the Roman coins—a denarius. He looks at it and says, "Whose image and superscription is this?" They say to him, "Cæsar's." He says to them, "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's."

By this singular and short reply the hypocrisy and the inconsistency of his questioners are at once exposed. The mere payment of the tribute is but a secondary matter after all. The true, the great question was, Should the Roman rule be submitted to or not? was it or was it not lawful to submit to that authority, to bear the foreign yoke? This question the Jewish people and these Pharisees, their most influential leaders, had suffered so far to be decided. They had yielded to and accepted the foreign yoke. There was this manifest token of subjection, that Roman money was circulating among them as the common and accepted coin of the realm. It was an acknowledged maxim, it had become a rabbinical proverb, that the coin of a country tells who is its king. Things being in that state in Judea, it was an idle, it was a deceitful, it was a base and malignant thing, to come to Jesus and try to force from him such a decision upon that isolated point of the payment of the tax, as would involve him with the Roman authorities. Let those who thought Cæsar was a usurper, and were prepared to cast off his authority, raise at once the standard of rebellion, and try the hazard of a civil war. Let those who, holding the existing govern-



ment to be illegitimate, thought at the same time that matters were not ripe for open resistance, bide their time, and mature their measures as well and as secretly as they pleased; but let not any, like these Pharisees and Herodians, while fawning upon the Roman governor, and forward in all the outward expressions of submission, pretend to have any difficulty about the payment of the tax; above all, let them not, while trying to keep up their own power and popularity by letting it be understood that they sympathized with the people in their opposition to the foreign rule, try to inveigle one who from the first had stood aloof and declined to take any part whatever in the political dissensions of the country, so as to accuse him to the governor, and have him condemned and executed for that which, neither in their own eyes, nor in that of the great majority of their fellow-countrymen, was accounted as a crime.

Coupling it with his demand for a sight of the Roman coin, and his pointing to the image and superscription stamped thereon, I have no doubt that those of Christ's auditors would have been right who interpreted the first part of Christ's answer, "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," as implying that it was lawful to pay the tribute-money; right and consistent—so long as Cæsar or any one was acknowledged as king, and the money from his mint taken and employed—that the tribute levied by him should be paid; the duty of obedience springing from the fact of the existing dominion. But there can be as little doubt that those also of that audience would have been right who interpreted the second part of Christ's answer, "Render to God the things that are God's," as carrying with it a severe and most merited rebuke of his questioners. For had they but fulfilled that acknowledged obligation, had they been but true to the spirit and laws of their own ancient government, no Roman soldier had ever invaded their borders, no Roman governor had sat in the Hall of Judgment at Jerusalem. It was their own failure in rendering to God the things that were his, a failure of which Pharisees and Herodians had alike been guilty, which had reduced their country to bondage; and now to be wrangling about the narrow question of the paying of the tribute, what was it but as if the men who by some act and deed had exposed themselves to the infliction of a certain penalty, were to sit down and discuss on abstract grounds the legitimacy of the authority by which that penalty was enacted?

Considering Christ's answer in its immediate bearings upon those who then stood before him, it is not difficult to see how completely it availed to silence his questioners, and to put it out of the power

of any of the parties there represented to turn it against him. They could only marvel at him, and hold their peace.

But separating this memorable saying of Christ from the particular circumstances under which it was uttered, and the immediate object it was intended to subserve, let us look at it as an aphorism of infinite wisdom, thrown into that proverbial form that gives it so easy and so strong a hold upon the memory, and promulgated for the universal guidance of mankind. "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; unto God the things that are God's." Both precepts may and ought to be obeyed. There need not be, there ought not to be, any discord or collision between them. Christ would not have imposed the double obligation had there been any natural or necessary conflict between the two. Each may be met and fully satisfied, the other being left entire and uninvaded. It ought never to keep a man from rendering all due obedience to his earthly sovereign, that he is faithful in his allegiance to him who is King of kings and Lord of lords. It ought never to keep him from serving aright his Heavenly King, that he has an earthly one to whom honor and obedience are due. It would be to misinterpret altogether the golden rule of Christ, to regard it as if it set before us two masters, both of whom we were called to serve, the one having authority in one region and over so much ground, the other having authority over quite a different region and within quite different limits, whose claims might occasionally become competing and conflicting. In rendering to Cæsar the things that righteously are Cæsar's, we can never be keeping from God the things that righteously are God's. And if the things that are God's be duly and fully rendered, Cæsar shall get what is his as one of the very things that God requires at our hands. The second precept, in fact, embraces the first as the greater covers the less.

Let it, however, be at once acknowledged, that rich and full of wisdom as the saying of our Lord is, it appears to fail in application; for is not, it may be said, the very point upon which we especially need guidance, left by it vague and undecided? What are the things that are Cæsar's? What are the things that are God's? How far in each case can and may we go? Where in each case ought we to stop? A line of demarcation it is thought there must be here between the two sets of obligations, the two kinds of duty and of service. But the adage does not help us to lay it down. Now, strange as it may appear, it is the very absence of any such precise and definite directory as the one thus craved

for, its careful avoidance of drawing any separating line between our civil and political duties on the one hand, and our religious ones on the other, which, to our view, stamps it with the signature of a wisdom that is divine. Christ does not define what we are to do, or what we are to refuse to do, in order to render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. No; but he gives us to understand that these never can be, or at least never ought to be, such as to interfere in the slightest degree with the higher duty we owe to God. He does not define what we are to do, or what not to do, in order to render to God the things that are his. No; but he gives us to understand that these never are or can be such as to interfere in the slightest degree with the dutiful obedience that we owe to kings and to all that are in authority over us. We are not, under the cloak of being faithful to Cæsar, to become disobedient to God. We are not, under the cloak of being obedient to God, to be unfaithful to our earthly ruler. And if, with equal singleness of eye, equal purity of motive, we make it equally a matter of conscience to keep both the precepts that he has linked together, no discord shall arise, no need of dividing lines be felt. I believe it to be impossible logically to define, so as absolutely to distinguish from one another, our social and political duties from our religious ones. To look only at a single section of the wide domain: when church and state have come into conflict, the attempt has always failed, I believe must ever fail, to mark off the boundary-line between them, and to say exactly and all along the line where the authority of the one ends, and that of the other begins. Collisions, unhappily, have arisen. The past is full of them: no darker chapters in the history of our race than those in which the record of these conflicts is preserved. But how has this come about? From kings becoming tyrants: from their forgetting that they, and all their subjects along with them, should render to God the things that are God's; which cannot be done unless the rights of the individual conscience be respected, and each man left free to believe and worship as that conscience dictates; from priests becoming kings, from their forgetting that Christ's kingdom is not of this world, and that it was never meant to be so administered as to call in the aids of earthly power—to use those instruments which earthly sovereigns are alone entitled to employ.

On both sides here the deepest wrongs have been done, the foulest crimes committed. The august name of royalty has been abused, to trample upon the still more sacred rights of conscience. It was abused when the proud monarch of Babylon raised the golden

image in the plain of Dura, and issued his order that all people and nations should worship it; it was abused when Darius signed the writing and issued the decree that no man should present any petition to God or man for thirty days, but to himself; it was abused when the rulers of the Jews summoned Peter and John before them, and straitly charged them that they should speak no more of Jesus to the people; it was abused when the emperor of Germany called Martin Luther before the Diet, and commanded him to retract the faith that he had derived from the sacred oracles; it was abused when the Stuarts prescribed to the Covenanters of Scotland the manner in which they were to worship God, and treated all who refused compliance with their ordinances as rebels against the throne, persecuting them even unto death. We cannot count Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the apostles of our Lord, Luther, the Scottish Covenanters, as violators of the precept, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," because at cost or peril of their lives they heroically resolved to obey God rather than man.

The sacred name of religion has also been abused. It was abused when Cromwell taught his men to see in their enemies the enemies of the Lord, and claimed the divine sanction for all the slaughter effected by the swords of his Ironsides; it was abused when he who arrogated to himself the title of God's vicegerent upon earth, raised himself above all earthly sovereigns, took it on him to sit in judgment upon their titles to their crowns, dethroned princes at his pleasure, and released subjects from allegiance to their lawful kings. It was still more awfully abused when spiritual offenders against the church—those who believed not as she would have them to believe, worshipped not as she would have them worship—were treated as criminals, to be punished by the sword, and the civil power was called on to enforce the spiritual sentence, and many a dungeon witnessed the torture, and many a death-pile was raised, and many a martyr-spirit was chased up through the fires to its place beneath the altar.

Fanatics on the one hand, and despots on the other, have sadly traversed the Saviour's golden rule, and in doing so have only taught us how difficult a thing it is for weak humanity, when under the blinding influence of prejudice and passion, to bear in mind the double precept of our Lord: "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's: to God the things that are God's."



## V.

## QUESTION OF THE SADDUCEES AS TO THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.\*

TUESDAY.

BAFFLED and exposed by Christ's answer as to the payment of the tribute-money, the Pharisees retire. And now their great rivals, the Sadducees, take the field, and try to entangle Jesus in his talk. Though constituting a powerful party, it is not till the closing scene of the Saviour's life that the Sadducees appear to have taken any active part against him. It was alien from their disposition to interfere with any popular religious movement till it took such shape as made it in their eyes dangerous to the state, and then they did not scruple summarily to quench it. They looked with a haughty contempt upon what they regarded as the groundless beliefs and idle superstitious practices of the great bulk of their countrymen. In common with them they believed indeed in the divine origin of the Jewish faith, restricted as they took that faith to be mainly to the announcement that there was but one God, the God of Israel, in opposition to all idolatry. They admitted the divine authority of the laws and institutions of Moses, whom they especially honored as their great heaven-sent and heaven-instructed lawgiver. But they rejected the whole of that oral tradition which had grown up around the primitive Mosaic revelation, which had come generally to be regarded, and was especially defended by the Pharisees, as of equal authority with it. They accepted the other books of the Old Testament as well as the Pentateuch, but there seems good reason to believe that they held the latter in peculiar and pre-eminent esteem. In their interpretation of the Pentateuch they adhered rigidly to the letter, rejecting all the false glosses and elaborate explanations and inferences which the Pharisaic Rabbis had introduced. Into their religious creed the Sadducees would admit nothing which Moses had not directly and unambiguously announced. True to their character as the freethinkers or rationalists of their age and nation, they were incredulous as to any other existences or powers influencing human affairs beyond those that lay open to the observation of their senses. They did not—as professed disciples of Moses they could not—repudiate the agency

\* Matt. 22 : 23-33 ; Mark 12 : 18-27 ; Luke 20 : 27-40.

of God as exerted in the creation and government of the world. But they limited that agency to a general supervision and control which left full scope to human volition and human effort, which they regarded as the chief factors in the unfolding of events. So far as their professed faith would let them, they were materialists. They acknowledged the existence of one great Spirit. They could not deny that beings called angels had occasionally, in the early times whose history was recorded by Moses, appeared to take some part in earthly affairs. But, disbelieving in the existence of any other spirit save that of the Supreme, whatever their explanation of these angelic manifestations, it was one that left them at liberty to deny, as they did, that there was any permanent and separate order of beings called angels standing between men and God. They said that there was "no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit." Acts 23:8. They believed in the soul of man only as exhibited in and by the body which enshrined it; with that body it perished at death. The future state, a world of rewards and punishments hereafter for the things now done in the body, was but a dream. To speak of the resurrection of the body at some after period was a solecism. There was no spirit for it to be reunited with. It might please God, out of the materials that had once formed one human body, to make another like it, and to plant in it another soul; but there was, there could be, no real resurrection of the dead, no rising to life again of the same beings that had been buried. If such a thing could be, and were actually to take place, the beings so raised would return (as they imagined) to the same kind of life as that which previously had been theirs; and from the very absurdities and contradictions which would be implied in this, they drew many an argument against the popular belief in a resurrection, which those adhering to that belief, holding it as they did in a very gross and materialist fashion, were unable to meet.

How did such men look upon Jesus Christ? Perhaps in the first instance as a weak but harmless enthusiast, little worth their notice, or worth only a smile or a scoff. His teaching, so far as it was reported to them, or they knew anything about it, was utterly distasteful to them; it was animated by a spirit totally the reverse of theirs; it was full of faith in the invisible. In it the spiritual, the future, the eternal, not only enwrapped but absorbed the present, the temporary, the sensible. God was no longer a mere name for a remote and inaccessible Being, who sat aloof upon a throne of exalted supremacy. He was a Father, continually engaged in guiding, protecting, providing; clothing the lilies of the field; feeding

the fowls of the air; causing his sun to shine; sending his rain from heaven; caring for all the creatures of his power, all the children of his love. No thought was to be taken for the body as compared with that which should be taken for the soul. The world beyond the present stood out in vivid perspective and relief. The angels of God were represented as rejoicing there over each sinner that repented on earth, and the spirits of the dead as waiting to welcome each brother spirit as it passed up to its place beside them in the heavens.

How the Sadducees regarded the miracles of our Lord it is difficult to say. They would regard his feeding of the hungry and his curing of the diseased either as impositions, or exercises of some occult power of which he had become possessed. But when he pretended to cast out devils and to raise the dead, his miracles came into direct collision with their unbelief, and awakened more than incredulity—stirred up malignity. He was in their eyes a base and bad man who could thus deceive the people. If he would prove that he came from God, let some sign direct from God be given. The only occasion on which, during the course of our Saviour's ministry, the Sadducees interfered with him, was when they once joined the Pharisees in demanding from him a sign from heaven. They got signs enough, some of them wrought under their own eyes, as in the healing of the man born blind, and in the raising of Lazarus, but signs which only increasingly exasperated them, so that when they saw that the movement created by Jesus was assuming politically so threatening an aspect, they were quite willing at last to league with the Pharisees, and assist in removing him; for it was better, so said one of themselves, that one man should die than that the whole nation should perish. Parties to the recent resolution come to by the Sanhedrim, the Sadducees were watching with as jealous eyes as the Pharisees all that was taking place in the courts of the temple. Though conspiring with them in their design, it may have been with some degree of secret complacency that they noticed how in the word-battle about the tribute-money he had foiled the rival sect. They have a question of their own, however, with which, as they fancy, he will find it more difficult to deal; one with which they had often pressed their adversaries, and to which they had never got any satisfactory reply. They will see how Jesus will deal with it. If he agree with them, then adieu to his power with the people; if he fail to answer, what a triumph both over him and all credulous believers in a resurrection!

They state their case and propose their query. Moses had

commanded that if a Jew died childless, leaving a widow, his brother should marry her, and had ruled that the child of the second marriage should be reckoned as the heir of the brother predeceased. There were seven brothers, they told Jesus, who all died, each having been successively the husband of the same woman; and last of all the woman died: "in the resurrection, therefore," they say to him, very confidently—somewhat coarsely and contemptuously—"whose wife shall she be of the seven?" Christ's answer is direct and emphatic. "Ye do err," he says, "not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." His charge against them is not one of hypocrisy, but of error, of wrong belief, that error having a twofold source: 1. Their ignorance of the meaning of the Scriptures, of that very book of Moses from which they had quoted; 2. Their ignorance of the power of God, of the manner of its exercise generally, and, more particularly, of the way in which it should be exercised in effecting that resurrection which they denied. Taking these sources of error in inverse order, Jesus first unfolds wherein their error as to the power of God consisted. They looked upon it too much as a mere force, illimitable indeed, yet fixed, unvarying, working now as it had ever done before, to work hereafter even as it was working now. They failed to recognise it as the forthputting of the energy of a living Being who was ever thereby embodying his will, expressing his purposes, executing his plans—the very same error as to the power of God which lies at the root of a large part of our modern infidelity, traceable, as it easily is, up to a denial of the personal agency of a Being who has plans and purposes and a will of which the whole creation is but a constant and gradual development. But, still more particularly, the Sadducees had erred in limiting the future manifestations of the power of God, in imagining that if the dead were to rise again, they were to live subject to the same conditions, united to each other by the same relationships with those that now exist. Prior to the incarnation, very little beyond the bare fact that there was to be a resurrection of the dead had been revealed. Had any right conceptions of the character and power of the great Creator been entertained, preparing the mind that entertained them for an endless variety in the future as we now know that there has been in the past, the very nature of the fact, apart from all further information about it, that there was to be hereafter a general resurrection of the dead, should have stifled in the birth such an idle objection as that which these Sadducees were urging; for, come how it might, let it be attended with whatever other outward changes in the physical condition of our globe,



it was in itself a change too great to allow of any ideas borrowed from the present condition of things being transferred to that new state of which it must form the initial stage. But Jesus goes a step farther than this: he puts his hand forward partially to lift the veil, and tell somewhat of the nature and the extent to which these changes will be carried which the resurrection will involve. "And Jesus, answering, said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." Luke 20:34-36. This much is told us here; that great changes are in store for us; that out of the grave a new economy is to arise, elevated in all its conditions and relationships above that under which we now dwell. But how much also remains untold; how much to check that prurient curiosity with which we are tempted to pry into the future, and extort from it its secrets!

We have got in the Bible two brief sketches which none but the finger of God could have drawn, a sketch of the beginning and a sketch of the end of the world as it now is. The one, the picture of the past, the story of the creation, how very difficult has it been for us to decipher it; how slowly are we spelling out its meaning; how much of it still remains obscure; how utterly should we have failed in interpreting it aright, had it not so happened that, in these later years, we have got access to other records, also somewhat dim as yet, which the events as they occurred stamped enduringly upon the solid rocks. Now if the scriptural picture of the past was so dark and so difficult to understand, was in our hands so long misunderstood and misinterpreted, how can we expect it to be otherwise with the scriptural picture of the future, which tells of a coming epoch more unlike the present than is the present to any epoch of the past? How wise then and becoming for us, till the events occur that shall yield the true interpretation, to confine ourselves to the simple and general truths that lie upon the face of those figurative descriptions of the future state which abound in the Bible, and which ought never to be treated as literally and historically true. How vain to use what were meant only to be obscure hints, as stepping-stones from which fancy may safely mount and soar away at random. Let us be satisfied with the little that we can now know. It doth not yet appear what we shall be. We see but through a glass darkly, nor will any straining of our eyeballs

make clearer that cloudy medium through which alone we are permitted to gaze. Standing with that wonderful future before us, on which our eye cannot but often and eagerly be fixed, there is happily for us another and a better occupation than that of filling the void spaces with forms and colors of our own creation. Children of that coming resurrection we all must be. No mountain shall have breadth enough to cover us, no ocean depth enough to hide us, when once the imperial summons soundeth, "Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment." But children of a blessed resurrection, of the resurrection unto life, we can only be by becoming now the children of God. Let that be our present, our steadfast aim; let that goal be reached, and then let us rest quietly in the assurance that, raised with Christ, we shall be sharers of his immortality, shall die no more, but be as the angels which are in heaven.

The error of the Sadducees as to the power of God having been exposed, Christ proceeds to notice their error as to the Scriptures: "As touching the dead that they rise; have ye not read in the book of Moses?" Mark 12:26. Among the Jews, down till near the times of Christ, the first five books of our Bible formed but one book, written continuously on one roll of parchment. It is out of this book, called ordinarily the Book of the Law, that he quotes a sentence in proof of the resurrection. He might have cited other ampler and much clearer testimony from other parts of the sacred Scriptures, especially from the Psalms and the books of Job, Daniel, and Hosea; but he is dealing now with the Sadducees, and he takes the passage from the same writings to which they had themselves appealed. "Have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err." Mark 12:26, 27. The link that binds here the premise to the conclusion is anything but apparent at first sight. The inference seems neither natural nor necessary. Does God's calling himself the God of the departed patriarchs of itself prove that these patriarchs were still living? Is not this the simple and only meaning of the passage quoted: that he who had been the God of the fathers would be the God of the children? Even granting that the continued existence of those, of whom God spake as being still their God, was to be legitimately inferred from the expression cited, what proof was involved in that of their resurrection? Might the soul not live though the body were left for ever in the grave? In answer to such questions, let it be noted that Christ's reply to the

Sadducees was evidently rather general than specific—cut at the root of their unbelief rather than at the particular branch of it pressed on his regard. These men were unbelievers in the resurrection of the body, because they were unbelievers in the immortality of the soul. The two were so connected in their regards that they stood or fell together. Prove to them the one, the major proposition—that the soul survived the dissolution of the body—and you cut away the ground upon which their rejection of the other rested. Establish the fact that Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob were still living when God spake of them as he did to Moses from the bush, and you overturn the foundation of their infidelity. And this is what Jesus does, not so much by argument, as by his own authoritative declaration that there lay in the phrase, “I am the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob,” a depth of meaning that the Sadducees had failed to penetrate—that it was nothing short of an announcement that the relationship in which God stood to these departed patriarchs was so peculiar, so close, so gracious, as to preclude the possibility of either soul or body ever finally perishing, as to involve at once the immortality of the one and the resurrection of the other. We would be ready at once to acknowledge that, had Christ not put this meaning upon the phrase, had he not furnished us with this key for the unlocking of its full significance, it would not have appeared to us necessarily to have involved the inference that is drawn from it. But let us be equally ready to accept the interpretation of it that he has given. We would do so even though the links that bound the premise to the conclusion remained obscure; but we lay this brief compendious argument in favor of the resurrection alongside that expanded proof which St. Paul unfolds in the 15th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, and light begins to dawn upon it.

The idle question of the Sadducees was much akin in character, owned the same spiritual pedigree, with that dealt with by the apostle: “But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?” As Jesus met the query put to him about the woman and her seven husbands, by telling his questioners that they utterly mistook the nature of the changes that the resurrection was to bring with it, for in that world it was to usher in, there was to be neither marrying nor giving in marriage; so Paul met the questioners of his day by telling them that they too had fallen into the like mistake of confounding the future with the present; that it was not to be the same body that was buried which was to rise, but one as different from it as the seed that rots beneath

the sod is from the stalk of wheat that issues from it; that flesh and blood could not inherit the kingdom of God; that the natural was to be changed into the spiritual, the corruptible into the incorruptible, the terrestrial into the celestial. And just as Christ deduces from the covenant relationship in which God stood to the patriarchs the preservation of their entire being, and the clothing it with a deathless immortality, even so from the relationship in which Jesus stands to all who are in vital union with him, does the apostle draw the very same conclusion. In taking their nature on him, in bearing their sins, in dying that they might live, Jesus took their whole humanity and wound it round him, and so identified it with his own being and estate, that as in him they live, with him they must rise again, his life involving theirs, his resurrection involving theirs. Mysterious incorporating union with Jesus Christ! that begins with the simple act of trust and love which binds our weak and sinful spirit to our Redeemer, and brings us into such close and hallowed fellowship with God, that we can hear him say to us, 'I am thy God, even as I was the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and of the faithful in all ages!'—what a linked array of untold incalculable benefits and blessings does it carry in its train! This among the rest, that, by passing them through the corruption of the grave, he shall change these bodies of ours and make them like to his own glorious body; and associate them as meet companions of the purified spirits that he shall exalt to the glories and services and blessedness of heaven. Dead by nature as we all are in our sins, let us so embrace Him who is the resurrection and the life that we shall be quickened together with Christ, raised up together with him through faith of the operation of God who hath raised him from the dead. "For if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness; and if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."



## VI.

THE LAWYER'S QUESTION—THE TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS—CHRIST IS DAVID'S SON AND DAVID'S LORD.\*

## TUESDAY.

PHARISEES, Herodians, Sadducees have each in turn been foiled in their assaults. Jesus has either turned aside the edge of their insidious questions, or has given such reply as recoils upon the questioners. Among the auditors who are standing by while this questioning is going on, there is one, himself a Pharisee and a scribe, who, struck with admiration at our Lord's answer, ventures an inquiry of his own. In making it he does not appear to have been animated by any sinister or malignant motive. He may, as St. Matthew seems to intimate, have been incited by others to put his question, in the hope that it might puzzle or perplex, but the question itself has no such character, reveals no such intent; bearing as it does all the marks of being the ingenuous inquiry of one who, disturbed and dissatisfied with the manifold classifications and frivolous distinctions introduced by the ordinary teachers of the law, sought the judgment of Jesus in addressing to him the question, "Master, which is the great, the first of all the commandments?" "Is there any one commandment which is entitled to pre-eminence over all the rest? if there be, what is that one command, and upon what ground does its claim to supremacy repose?" Christ's answer is direct and explicit. There is, he tells the questioner, such a command. To love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul, and mind and strength, is the first and the great commandment of the law. But there is another, a second commandment, like unto the first, flowing out of it, and founded on it: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

The law of God, according to the view thus given of it, was not an aggregation of so many separate precepts, some of which a man might keep, while he broke others; suggesting of course the double question whether he broke more than he kept, as if that were to decide whether on the whole he was a breaker or a keeper of the law; or, were that held to be too rude and mechanical a method of judging, suggesting a comparison in point of importance

\* Matt. 22 : 34-46 ; Mark 12 : 28-37.

between those commands that were kept and those that were broken, so as to supply a better estimate of the amount and value of the obedience rendered. In opposition to all such views of the law of God—views not confined to the scribes and Pharisees of Christ's day, which lie at the bottom of all those crude notions as to man's actual standing towards the divine law which circulate widely in the world we live in, Jesus teaches that a divine unity pervades that law, a unity that cannot be broken; all its single and separate commands resting upon a common, firm, immutable basis; all so connected in meaning, spirit, and obligation, that you cannot truly obey one without obeying all, nor break one without breaking all. Looking at the law in this oneness of character, Jesus points to the two requirements of love to God and love to one another as containing within themselves the sum and substance of the whole. First we are called upon to love the Lord, to love him as our God, to love him with all our heart. It is not a mere barren faith in his divinity, a cold and distant homage, a bare acknowledgment of his sovereign right, a studious observance of prescribed forms of worship, the presenting of offerings, the making of sacrifices in his name and for his glory, that is required. Nothing but the supreme love of the heart, pouring out the whole wealth of its affections on him, can meet this great demand. There must be no other God before or beside him, no other having an equal or rival place in our regards. All idolatrous self-love, creature-love, world-love, must be renounced in order that this first and greatest of the commands be kept. "And thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." 'Thyself thou mayest and shouldest love, but not supremely, not as distinct from or independent of God, but as one of his children, as an agent in his hands, as an instrument of his grace, as a vessel fashioned for his honor. Thus and thus only may self-love rightly form part of thy being, and enter into thy motives of action. And thou shalt love thy neighbor *as thyself*:' a mode and measure of loving others which can be truly followed and obeyed only when love to God has predominated over the natural self-idolatry; for if a man love himself supremely, he can love no other as he loves himself. All, however, is reduced to order, all brought within the limits of a possible achievement, when God gets his first and rightful place. You cannot love the God of love as he requires, without loving your neighbor also. The one love includes the other, sustains and modulates the other. If a man say he loves God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him. It is in this way that the second command is like

unto the first. They are two, and at the same time one. The first cannot be kept while the second is broken, nor the second be kept while the first is broken. A false or spurious kind of love to God, showing itself in all manner of superstitious worship and self-mortification, you may have, coupled with intensely malign emotion towards others. Nay more, you may not only have them in conjunction, but the first ministering to the second—for there have been no greater haters of their fellow-men than those who have cherished such kind of love to God—but the true, the only genuine love to God, we cannot have, without its generating kindly and benevolent affections towards those who, equally with ourselves, are the objects of the divine regard. And, on the other hand, you may have a very ardent love to others apart from any deep love to God; but search its nature and mark its developments, and you will find that neither as to the objects it aims at, nor as to the boundaries it observes, does it come up to a faithful obedience to that requirement which obliges us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

“On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Love is the golden link that binds the whole together, and hangs the whole upon the throne of the Eternal. Love is the fulfilling of the law. No precept is or can be kept where it is wanting. If love be present, obedience is at once rendered easy, and gets the character that makes it pleasing in the sight of God.

The scribe's reply to our Lord's answer shows how thoroughly he sympathized with it. He had admired the wisdom shown in Christ's dealing with other questioners. He admires still more the wisdom shown in the answer to his own question. It accords entirely with what, after much thought bestowed upon the matter, he had himself come to believe. “Well, Master, thou hast said the truth; for there is one God, and there is none other but he; and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.” The alacrity, the warmth, the vigor of this response, tell how intense the conviction was of which it was the utterance. Born and brought up though he had been in the very heart of a region where other and very different sentiments prevailed, he had come to see the comparative worthlessness of mere ceremonialism; that offerings and sacrifices were worse than idle forms, mere solemn mockeries of God, if that inner sentiment of the heart, whence only they could have life and value, were wanting; that the only true and animating principle of all piety towards God, and of all right conduct towards our fellow-men, was love; that as the

body without the spirit is dead, so all the mass of outward service without love was dead also. In our turn we wonder at the clear and just conception of the relative importance of the moral and the ceremonial, to which, placed as he had been, this man had reached. But far as he had got, he yet lacked one thing. He had ceased to put that value upon burnt-offerings and sacrifices that the mass of his countrymen did. His searching eye had seen through the hollowness of that external sanctimoniousness which was cultivated all around him with such sedulous care. But he had not yet come to see all that the first and greatest of the law's commands required, nor to feel how far short of its requirement his obedience had fallen. The hollowness of one way of attempting to obey it he fully saw, but the imperfections of that way which he had learned to put in its place, its impotence to justify the sinner before the tribunal of the Most High, he had not perceived. He wanted the humble, broken, contrite heart; and so Jesus says to him, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God;" not far from, but yet not in; nearer by many a step than those who are going about in the rounds of a punctilious pietism to establish a righteousness of their own before God, but still not across the border-line which encompasses that kingdom which we must enter in the spirit of penitence and faith, as knowing and feeling that by the deeds of the law, how far soever our compliance with it be carried, no flesh living can be justified in the sight of God. Let the judgment passed upon this man's position by the unerring Judge proclaim to us the truth, that it is not enough to have made the discovery of the worthlessness of all service without love; that to get into the kingdom the further discovery must be made, that in all things, and especially in that very love to God which primarily and above all is required of us, we come so miserably short, have so grievously offended, that our only resource is to throw ourselves upon the rich mercy of our God revealed in Jesus Christ.

And was it not for the very purpose of turning the eyes of that scribe, the eyes of those who then stood around him, and the eyes of the men of all ages upon Himself, as the great revealer of the Father, that Jesus, having put all to silence, so that no man durst ask him any further question, in his turn becomes a questioner? The law and the prophets, whose sum and substance, so far as they were a code of duty, he had just declared, had something more in them than authoritative commands, were meant to accomplish other purposes besides that of making known to men their duty to God and to one another. There were promises and prophecies in them as well as precepts; prophecies and promises pointing to him by whom the law



was to be magnified and made honorable. The law carried the gospel in its bosom. As to the one, the scribe put a question to Jesus which goes to the very heart of the matter: as to the other, Jesus, seeing the Pharisees gathered around him, puts a question to them, which does the same. "What think ye," he says, "of Christ? whose son is he?" The answer springs at once to every lip.

"Son of David" was the familiar, the favorite title, by which Christ, the expected Messiah, was known among them. When, amazed by his miracles, the people began to conjecture that he was indeed the Christ, they said to one another, "Is not this the son of David?" When the woman of Syrophœnicia, and the two blind beggars of Capernaum, Bartimeus of Jericho, and others, would express their faith in his Messiahship, they did it by saying, "Have mercy on us, thou son of David." When the multitude, translated for the time out of incredulity into belief, surrounded him on his late triumphal entry into Jerusalem, they exclaimed, "Hosanna to the son of David!" a salutation that the very children in the temple next day repeated—showing us how wide and general was the knowledge of this name. The answer then to Christ's first question is immediate and unhesitating. Not so the answer to the second: "He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?" Jesus quotes here the first verse of the 110th Psalm, a psalm assumed by him and acknowledged by the Jews to have been written by David under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Two great personages appear in it, the one speaking of and to the other. It is with the high position, the complex character, the glorious destinies of the latter that the psalm is occupied throughout. Addressed by the highest of all epithets, he is introduced as sitting on the loftiest of all elevations. His kingly power, his eternal priesthood, his vast and ever-widening sway, are successively set forth. The Jews admitted that these were prophecies touching the Messiah. But between them and any right apprehension of the true character of the spiritual rule and empire of that Messiah there hung an obscuring mist. The bright and gorgeous vision that had floated for ages before the eyes of the Jewish people was that of the future advent of a King who was to raise the Jewish commonwealth to supremacy over the nations; the vision of an earthly, visible, world-wide monarchy to be set up by the son of David; a vision which, as their affairs grew dark and desperate, and their national independence was more and more threatened, stood forth in brighter and brighter col-

oring to gild the clouds that closed in darkness above their heads; a vision clung to with an enthusiastic devotion which ennobled them as a nation, and led on to the deeds of chivalrous heroism, which have crowned with glory their last wars with the Romans, but which sunk them into spiritual blindness, and kept them from understanding the very prophecies upon which it ostensibly was founded. It was this vision, baseless as it was bright, which Jesus seeks to dissipate by putting to them his pointed inquiry: 'If Christ be David's son, how could he at the same time be David's Lord?' The true key to that announcement in the 110th Psalm, and to many similar prophecies, was wanting to the Jews so long as the true and proper divinity, as well as the true and proper humanity, of their Messiah remained unperceived and unacknowledged. —

How often and how strikingly does Holy Writ set forth the double, and as it might seem incongruous relationship of Christ to David, as being at once his son and his Sovereign, his successor and yet his Lord—set forth the singular, and as it might seem incompatible qualities or characteristics that belong to him! "And there shall come forth," saith the prophet Isaiah, "a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots." Isa. 11:1. He is the rod, the branch growing up out of, hanging upon, and supported by the parent stem. But anon the image changes, and the rod, the branch becomes the root by which the stem itself is supplied with nourishment and strength: "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious." Isa. 11:10. "Behold," saith Jeremiah, "the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness." Jer. 23:5, 6. Here, by an equal violence of figurative language, the helpless dependent branch turns into a king, and that king is elevated, not to an earthly, but to the heavenly throne. Similarly in Zechariah: "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." Zech. 6:12, 13. Here, by a curious metamorphosis, the Branch first becomes the builder of a temple, then a ruler upon a throne, then a priest and

king together, still upon the throne, establishing in that twofold capacity, or by help of the twofold prerogatives of prince and priest, the counsel or covenant of peace for Israel. So is it in the ancient prophecies, and so is it also in the visions of the Apocalypse. What is the first vision that John gets of Jesus in the heavenly places? A door is opened in heaven, a throne is seen set there; the right hand of him who sits upon the throne holds out the book sealed with the seven seals. The strong angel proclaims with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" The challenge is made, resounds through heaven, remains unanswered. The apostle begins to weep because no man is found worthy to open and to read the book. One of the elders says to him, "Weep not; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." John looks around for this opener coming, and lo! in the midst of the throne there stands a lamb as it had been slain, who takes the book and opens all its seals. He is told to look for a lion, and beheld a lamb. The lion and the lamb: the strongest and the fiercest, the weakest and the gentlest of animals; in Jesus the qualities of both appear, blended in singular yet most attractive combination. And in the last revelation of himself he makes to John, Jesus says, "I am the root and the offspring—the root and the branch—of David, and the bright and morning star."

"What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? How can he be David's son and David's Lord?" These last words of our Lord's public ministry, which filled the temple courts of old, and found there no reply, are they not still going forth wherever the gospel of his grace is preached, waiting a response? Nor can any fit response be ever given till we see and be ready to acknowledge that in him, our Saviour, there meet and mingle all divine and human attributes—David's Lord in his divinity, David's son in his humanity; till we own him, and cleave to him, and hang upon him as at once our elder brother, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, and our Lord and our God; the morning star on the brow of our dark night, that heralds the bright, the cloudless, the unending day.

## VII.

## THE WOES DENOUNCED UPON THE PHARISEES.\*

## TUESDAY.

ADDRESSING himself specially to the Pharisees, Jesus asked them how Christ could be at once David's son and David's Lord ; and they stood mute before him.

It is of this particular occasion that St. Mark says, "then the common people heard him gladly." They have been looking on and listening with intense curiosity—as well they might, for it is truly a marvellous scene that is before them. Here, on the one side, is one of themselves, an obscure Galilean, with no rank, or office, or acknowledged authority. There, on the other, stand the first men of the land, the chief of the priesthood, the heads of the scribes. It had long been known that the Pharisees repudiated and condemned the teaching of Christ. More recently their enmity had come to a head. They had even offered a reward for his apprehension. Now they meet him face to face in the most public place in all the city. Will they arrest him? will they order their officers to bind him and carry him off to prison? No: in presence of the people they will crush him with their words; they will convict him of ignorance, or incompetence, or sedition. And how shall this untaught, unfriended, unprotected man be able to stand against such odds? One can well enough imagine that when the strange word-duel in the temple courts commenced, the sympathy of the people would be on Christ's side. Their sympathy deepens, wonder grows into admiration, as in each succeeding encounter he comes off more than conqueror, till at last his opponents stand silenced before him. Still, however, with all the wonder and all the admiration that Christ excites, other disturbing and perplexing emotions stir the breasts of the spectators: for those opponents of Jesus are the men to whom from infancy they have been taught to look up with unbounded reverence; to whose authority, especially in all matters of religious faith and practice, they have been accustomed implicitly to bow. The adversaries of Jesus have been baffled but not convinced; an unquenched, an intensified hatred to him is obviously burning within their breasts. How is it that none of their rulers will receive him, that almost to a man they are so bitterly opposed to him?

\* Matt. 23; Mark 12:38-40; Luke 20:45-47.



May we not believe that in its immediate and direct object, as addressed to the perplexed and excited crowd that then stood before and around him, the discourse recorded in the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew was intended to take a stumbling-block out of their way, and by the bold and fearless exposure that it made of the character and conduct of the Pharisees, to emancipate the people from that blind thralldom to their old religious leaders in which they had so long been held? But the discourse had a wider scope. It was our Lord's last day in the temple, his last time of openly addressing the people, the closing hour of his public ministry. This interest surrounds the words then spoken, that it was in them that his last farewell to the temple, his farewell to his countrymen was taken; words not spoken for that audience only, words of solemn warning for his followers in all ages, for the men of every generation. Regarding it in this light, without entering into any minute or consecutive exposition, let us offer one or two general reflections upon this discourse of our Saviour.

1. It tells us what it was that chiefly kindled against it the burning indignation of Jesus Christ. Against what are his terrible denunciations pointed? Not against either covert skepticism or open infidelity. The Sadducees are here comparatively overlooked. Not against those sins, to which one or other of the passions and instincts of our nature prompt when allowed unbridled sway. A very singular and instructive contrast shows itself throughout his ministry between our Lord's treatment of that class of offences, and of the one which he here exposes. Compare, for instance, his treatment of the woman who had been a sinner, and of her to whom he said, "Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more," with his treatment of the haughty Pharisee at whose table he met the one, and of the double-hearted men who brought to him the other. It is among those making the largest professions of piety, priding themselves on their social position and the outward respectability of their lives, that Jesus discovers the materials for the severest denunciations that ever came from his lips. He finds these materials in that kind and form of religion which, under the guise of great fervor and zeal for the cause of God, beneath the large and brodered garment of a showy profession, gets ample room and opportunity for the indulgence of vanity and pride, the lordly, ambitious, despotic spirit; in that kind and form of religion that makes so much of the outward, the institutional, the ceremonial, so little of the moral, the spiritual, the practical; which exalts the letter above the spirit of the divine commands; which, finding this old precept of Moses, "Thou shalt

bind these commandments of the Lord for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be as a frontlet between thine eyes," thought that this command was kept by having strips of parchment with passages of Scripture on them bound upon the forehead and the arm, and fancied that the broader the parchment scrips, the more numerous the passages inscribed, the larger the honor and the service rendered unto God; which, finding another old law of Moses, that no unclean animal should be eaten, strained every sort of drink carefully through a linen cloth, lest any gnat or the smallest unclean animalcule might be drunk; which, meeting with the ancient Mosaic order that a tithe of all produce should be offered to the Lord, was not content with presenting a tithe of the wheat, and the barley, and the oil, the common staple products of the land, but would give it of the mint, and the anise, and the cumin, the smallest garden fruits and flowers; which invented nice casuistical distinctions among oaths, making out that some were binding, others not, some were sinful, others not; which, notwithstanding all its punctilious attention to the minutiae of certain outward observances, all its laborious cleansing of the outside of the cup and the platter, was full within of extortion and excess—a very strange compound of very heterogeneous elements, distasteful to all true-hearted men, infinitely distasteful to our Lord and Master. We might have hoped that, with the departure of that old ritualism of Judaism, with the coming in of the simpler institute of Christianity, with the lessons and the life of our Lord himself before us, the temptation to and the opportunity for such singular and such offensive development of human nature would depart. But no; the spirit of Pharisaism lies deep in that nature; deepest where the superstitious and devotional element is strong and the moral is comparatively weak, not peculiar to certain times and places, or to be seen only in certain churches under the drapery of ecclesiastical ceremonialism kindred to that of the Jews. It is to be found everywhere, under all forms of religious observance; where it has the least natural aliment, making all the more of what it has—nay more, as if soured by its meagre diet, nowhere will you see a more odious and repulsive growth of it than in those very churches which have stripped themselves the barest of all forms and ceremonies.

2. Let us notice the insidiousness and deceitfulness of that spirit of Pharisaism which in this discourse Christ so fully exposes and so heavily condemns. The men whom Christ had immediately in his eye, whose hollowness and falsity he dissects with so unsparing a hand, had a very different opinion of themselves from that which he

expresses. They believed themselves to be really the most religious people in their own country—in the world. There may have been a few of them utter and arrant hypocrites, who knew themselves to be mere pretenders, with whom all the show of devotion was intentionally and consciously assumed for selfish and sinister purposes. But we should err egregiously if we thought that such was the character of the majority. They imagined themselves to be sincere, and it was that imagination which was at the bottom of their intense self-satisfaction, their eager and ostentatious displays. Self-deception went so far with them that they actually believed themselves to be the natural successors and representatives of the prophets and righteous men of the old economy. The memory of their martyred forefathers was so dear to them, that they built their tombs and garnished their sepulchres, and said to one another, “If we had lived in those old times, we should not have been partakers with those who shed their blood.” Yet at this very time they are meditating the death of Jesus—are about to imbrue their hands in the blood of God’s own Son. Extraordinary instance, you may say, of self-deception. You would not think so if the eye of Omniscience were for a moment lent, and it was given to you to discern how many there are presently alive—busy, bustling, pretentious religionists, builders of prophets’ tombs, garnishers of martyrs’ sepulchres, the readiest to say, “Had we lived in the days of those odious Pharisees, we had been no partakers of their guilt”; who, if subjected to the same kind of test with the Pharisees—these tests altered according to the changes that the world since then has undergone—would do their deed over again—in the spirit, if not in the letter, would crucify Christ afresh. Among all the spirits that have ever entered into and taken possession of our nature, there is not one of such self-deceiving power as that of Pharisaism.

3. You have a striking instance brought before you in this discourse of a nation being reckoned with not individually but collectively. The generation in which Jesus lived had sins enough of its own to answer for. Had there stood against it but that one charge of having despised, rejected, crucified the Lord, it had been enough. But see how, in the spirit of sublime superiority to all selfish considerations, Jesus makes no mention here of the treatment given to himself. He looks backward, and lo! all the righteous blood that had been shed in the land lifts up its cry for vengeance! He looks backward, and lo! in the hand of the Great Judge the cup of wrath is seen getting fuller and fuller as the guilt of generation after generation is poured into it! He looks forward, and lo! the men of the

generation then existing are beheld pouring the last drops into that cup, and by doing so, about to bring down its whole contents upon their devoted heads! But in the brief prophecy of what remained still to be done ere the treasured wrath of heaven descended there is something altogether singular. It is not a bare foretelling of the future by a commissioned agent of heaven. The prophet here rises far above the rank of all who had gone before. He speaks as the prophets' King and Lord. A greater than all the prophets is here. "Behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes." Matt. 23:34. Christ's feet are upon the pavement of the earthly temple, but he speaks as from the throne of heaven. Let those who deny the divinity of Jesus tell us with what propriety any mortal man—any, even the greatest of the prophets, could have spoken as he here does. The indirect, the incidental way in which he speaks, deepens the impression of his divinity. A vision of judgment is to be revealed. As he reveals it, he almost unconsciously, as we might say, realizes his own position as the Judge. And assuming that he is so when he tells us of that generation being made to suffer as well for others' transgressions as their own, what answer shall be given to those who would challenge the principle and rectitude of this procedure, but this, 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' All the length that we can here go, is to point to the thousand instances in God's ordinary providence in which the sins of fathers are visited upon their children, and to the many instances of human legislation and international action grounded upon the principle that a nation is not a set of isolated unconnected units, but a continuous corporate body, capable of contracting an obligation, and incurring a guilt that survives the existing generation. We do not say that the exemplification of it elsewhere in the arrangement of the divine providence, or its embodiment by ourselves when we assume the office of administrator or judge, carries with it the explanation of such a procedure as that announced here by Jesus Christ. We do not say that we have light enough to offer any sufficient vindication of it; but most assuredly we have not light enough to repudiate or condemn. Nay more, we are convinced that when the great mystery of God's dealings with mankind shall stand revealed in their eternal issues, it will be seen that our separate individual interests, for weal or for woe, have been wisely and righteously interlapped with the merit and the guilt of others to a far larger extent than any of us are now prepared to believe.

4. In this discourse, a phase of the character of Christ, and in him of God, is set before us, from which we ought not to avert our



eye. Christ's voice, as heard on earth, was not always one of gentleness and love. When occasion called for it, it could speak as the thunder speaks, in volumed terror. Never were severer epithets employed, never more terrible denunciations uttered, than those hurled at and heaped upon the heads of the Pharisees. Yet no mingling here of sinful human passion, of malice or revenge, no absence even of love. Has Jesus forgotten to be gracious? Are tenderness and compassion clean gone out of that most loving heart? We cannot believe so for a moment. Then let us believe that the deep, the strong, the burning indignation that breaks out here has a place and power of its own in the bosom of our Lord, and dwells together in perfect harmony with the milder and gentler attributes of his nature. Lightning lurks amid the warm soft drops of the summer shower; a consuming fire may come out of the very heart of love. Christ is the world's great Saviour; he is also the world's great Judge. It was as our Saviour he came down to this earth, and gentle and still indeed was the voice in which that office was discharged. He did not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets; but lest we should misinterpret, and imagine that his spirit was too soft ever to kindle into wrath, his hand too gentle to do other services than those of love, once and again, as here, he assumes the office of the Judge, and speaks with a startling sternness. He began his teaching on the mountain-side of Galilee; he closed it in the courts of the temple at Jerusalem. Compare the two discourses, the Sermon on the Mount, this discourse in the temple: the one begins with blessings, the other begins and ends with rebuke; the one pours its benedictions over the heads of the faithful, the other its maledictions over the heads of the faithless; the seven woes of the one confront the seven beatitudes of the other. Or take for contrast Christ's farewell to his friends, and his farewell to his enemies: the one composed of words of comfort, closing in that sublime intercessory prayer which he left behind him as a type or specimen of his advocacy for us in the heavenly places; the other composed throughout of terrible denunciations, types, and preludes of those awful judgments which in his judicial character he shall pronounce and execute upon the finally impenitent. And what does all this teach us but that the religion of Jesus Christ has a two-fold aspect? It carries both the blessing and the curse in its bosom. If here it speaks peace, there it speaks terror; if to some it has nothing but words of tenderness and encouragement, to others it has nothing but words of warning and of woe. It stands as the pillar-cloud stood between the Egyptians and the Israelites—with a side of glowing brightness and a side of overshadowing gloom. And yet,

let us not fail to notice, that after all it is not in tones of wrath that the last accents of this farewell of our Lord to his enemies fall upon our ear. The fire of righteous indignation that burns within him cannot but go forth. As flash after flash of the lightning it falls upon the hypocrite and false devotee. But under that fire the inner heart of Jesus at last dissolves into tenderness. Pity, infinite pity, pours her quenching tears upon it, and with another look and in altered tone, a look and tone in which the compassion of the God-head reveals itself, he exclaims, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" 'I would, but ye would not.' The willingness is all with him, the unwillingness with us. May the very thought of this take our unwillingness away; that at the last our house be not left desolate, that it be no other than the home that he hath prepared for all who love him.

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### VIII.

THE WIDOW'S MITE—CERTAIN GREEKS DESIRE TO SEE  
JESUS.\*

TUESDAY.

His terrible denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees having been delivered, Jesus passes into a court of the temple, the innermost to which they were admitted, called therefore the Court of the Women. On one side of this court stood the thirteen large chests, with openings shaped like trumpets, into which the free-will offerings of the people were thrown. Over against them Jesus seats himself, watching the passers-by. He sees many rich approach, and throw in, perhaps ostentatiously, their large contributions, but he does not make any comment on their gifts. At last, however, a poor woman approaches the place of deposit. Modestly, timidly, almost furtively, as if ashamed of being seen, and hiding what she gives, as all too small for public notice, she casts her farthing in, and is in haste to depart. See how the eye of the watcher fastens upon this woman. She is retreating in haste to hide herself in the crowd without; but she must not go till other eyes than those of Jesus have also been turned upon her. "He calls to him his disciples;" he bids them mark her well; and as their eyes are all upon her, he says to them,

\* Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4; John 12:20-36.

“Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in than they all.”

How many were there in Jerusalem, who, if their attention had been directed to the poor widow's act, and it had been told them that in giving these two mites she had cast in her all, would have condemned that act! What was cast into the treasury went either to the poor or to the priests, to the relief of the indigent or the upholding of the worship of the temple. But were there many poorer in all the city than the poor widow herself? Should she not have kept the little which she had for the relieving of her own wants? As to the priests and the temple, a large enough provision was made for them by public and private charity, without her being asked to add her trifling contribution. Who could tell, when it came into their hands, what these well-fed priests would do with her two mites? And even if she had a better security that her donation would be well applied, what need was there to give what was so much to her and what was so little to them? How many sayings of this kind might her act have called forth! and for one that might have praised, probably there would have been ten who would have condemned. But other eyes than those of a mere earthly prudence are on her, and another and very different sentence than one of condemnation is passed. Broad and deep in that poor widow's heart had the love of the God who was worshipped within that temple been shed. There, by the post of these gates, she had often waited and worshipped, and there, in her hours of sorrow, in that worship her burdened spirit had got relief. She would answer to the call that she knew that the Lord of that temple had given, to aid in the maintenance of its services. It was a debt of gratitude that she owed; it was a privilege to take any share in such a work. True, it was but the veriest trifle that she could afford; but it was willingly and gladly given. She would not have liked that any of those rich people, who were throwing in their silver and their gold as they went by, had seen her two mites drop out of her fingers. But there were eyes from which she could not hide them; and little as she thought of it, there was one across the court sitting in judgment upon her, who not only approved her deed, but elevated her above all the donors of the day. She is not only the greatest giver of them all, she has cast in more than they all together—more, not in money value, but in moral worth. And what else, by giving such world-wide circulation to this her act, and this his sentence on it, did Jesus mean, than to give a world-wide circulation to the truth, that in his sight, in his Father's sight, it is the motive which gives its true character to the act; that greatness in





THE WIDOW CASTING IN HER TWO MITES.



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his estimate of things consists not in the doing of great acts that every eye must see, and that every tongue may be ready to praise, but in doing what may be little things—so small that they shall escape all human notice, and so insignificant that there may be none to think them worthy of any praise; but doing them in a great spirit, from a great motive, for a great and noble and holy end? He is not the largest giver who, out of his abundance, and from many mixed motives, gives to this charity or to that, but he who, impelled by the pure love of God, and the desire to help on a good object, gives in largest relative proportion out of the surplus that remains to him after his own and his family's wants have been provided for.

We do not know the circumstances otherwise of this poor widow. Let us assume that these two mites were all she had after her personal wants had been satisfied. Let us assume that, slender as her income may have been, yet, like all the poor in the land of Israel, she had some such slender income upon which she could count. We cannot believe that if by casting these two mites in the treasury she actually made herself a pauper, with nothing thereafter but the casual and uncertain charity of others to depend on, that our Lord would have approved of the act. Assuming then that it was her all, in the sense of being her all that was left after the provision of her own immediate wants, that she bestowed upon the temple treasury; assuming also that all those rich people who went before and who followed her, in the first instance appropriated of their incomes what was needful to maintain them in the different grades of society in which they respectively were placed; let us ask ourselves, if the scale of giving on which she acted had been universally adopted, what would the revenue of that temple have been? We imagine that the woman had no family; we imagine that she had none naturally claiming a provision at her hands; we imagine that that treasury of the temple was the one great channel through which her charity flowed. It would be wrong indeed in such a state of things as that in the midst of which our lot is cast, to turn her act into a precedent, for any one object of Christian or common charity to claim the entire surplus that any one, rich or poor, among us may possess. But surely, all due limitations and exceptions made, there is something in the example thus held out which it becomes us to imitate; and we shall miss at least one great lesson which it gives if we fail to perceive how right a thing it is that this burden of giving should be equally and proportionally borne; knowing that our gifts are all accepted, not according to what a man hath not, but according to what every man has. The lesson which, above all others, and in all

departments of benevolent effort, we most need to have impressed on us, is the duty of sharing honorably and equally every burden that Christianity imposes.

The time and circumstances under which the approving verdict was passed upon the widow's offering enhance its interest. Woe after woe, in tones of terrible impressiveness, have pealed like volleyed thunder over the heads of his adversaries, and are still echoing in the courts of the temple. As if to show how quickly and fully the strong emotions of righteous indignation have passed out of his breast, he sits quietly down in the attitude of an unoccupied observer, all trace of anger gone from his countenance, all tones of anger from his voice, and asks his disciples to notice the poor widow's act.

But there was another and still more interesting exhibition of the state of our Lord's thoughts and feelings as he took his farewell of the temple. It is the high prerogative of genius to be able vividly to realize and represent the thoughts, and sentiments, and words appropriate to all kinds of characters, in all varieties of positions. Who that has read the pages of our great English dramatist has not remarked how true to nature each representation is, whether it be monarch on the throne or clown in the closet, statesman, warrior, prelate, or peasant that appears, and speaks, and acts? It is by the exercise of this great faculty that the personages and events of the past are reproduced and set forth before our eye. There is one Being, however, who appeared upon the stage of time, who stands beyond the reach of this faculty; for, be his genius what it may, who shall put himself in the place, or think the thoughts, or enter into the emotions of the Son of God as he passed through his earthly sojourn? And yet how natural the desire to know the thoughts awakened in his mind, the emotions kindled in his heart, by the incidents through which he passed, the individuals with whom he was thrown into contact? Here, however, imagination is at fault. Conscious of its incapacity, it reverently withdraws from the attempt either to conceive or to express how Jesus was affected by the varying events of his earthly pilgrimage. We cannot, dare not go here beyond what is revealed. And that is but little. No reader of the gospels can fail to have noticed how seldom it is that Christ gives us any glimpse of what was passing in the interior of his own spirit. With all the greater interest do we ponder over the few occasions in which the mantle that was ordinarily so closely drawn round its inner shrine is partially uplifted. Such is the interest which attaches to that passage of his life which now comes under our review.

— As Jesus is sitting over against the treasury, Andrew and Philip

come and tell him that in the outer court of the Gentiles certain Greeks are standing, who have expressed a strong desire to see him. Born and brought up as heathen men, they had been so far convinced of the superiority of the Jewish faith, that they were in the habit of coming up to Jerusalem to worship there the one living and true God. Whether they had seen or heard much or anything of Jesus before this time, and what it was which inspired them with such a strong desire to see him now, we do not know. This may have been their first visit to Jerusalem. Their earliest knowledge of Christ may have been derived from what they had witnessed within the last few days. They must have heard of the raising of Lazarus and the many miracles which had previously been wrought. They must have seen our Lord's triumphal entry into the city, and noticed how the whole community had been moved. The cleansing of the temple must have made a deep impression on their minds. It was the court of the Gentiles, the very part of the temple appropriated to the use of that class to which they belonged, which Jesus had sought to cleanse from its impurities and profanations. Let us imagine that those devout Greeks had themselves been scandalized by seeing the place consecrated to worship turned into a common market ground, by seeing the priesthood more eager to make money than to win Gentiles to their faith. Here, however, is one man, a Jew, animated by something like the right spirit, who drives out these buyers and sellers, whose aim and effort is that this place be made what it was meant to be, a house of prayer for all nations. Who can this Jesus be? He calls the temple his own house. He speaks of God as his own Father. The chief priests and rulers are angry at him; have even put a price upon his head; have given orders that if any man knew where he was, he should tell, in order that he might be taken and put to death. Yet he walks openly in the midst; the people gaze on him with wonder; the very children hail him with hosannas as the Son of David. Who, those strangers ask again, can this Jesus be? In their curiosity they come to Philip, a Galilean, a native of Bethsaida, one who knows their language, with whom they may have had some previous acquaintance, or they come to him because he is the one nearest them at the time, with whom they can most readily communicate, and they say to him: "Sir, we would see Jesus." Philip tells Andrew; Philip and Andrew, the Greeks in all likelihood following them, tell Jesus. He has many around him when this message is conveyed to him, and the disciples and the Greeks stand waiting the result. He gives no direct or immediate answer. He stands a moment, lost in thought, and then breaks out into expressions, vague



and dark enough to those who listened to them at the time, yet full of the richest meaning, and conveying, too, though neither the Greeks nor the disciples, nor any of those around, may have seen then how it was so, one of the best answers to the request which had just been made.

To understand this, let us remember that Jesus knew from the beginning what was to be the broad issue of his mission to this earth. The words of the Father, spoken of old by the prophet, were familiar to his ear: "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to restore the preserved of Israel. I will give thee to be a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth: a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of my people Israel." Knowing this, familiar with this from the beginning as the end and object of his incarnation, one cannot help believing that the narrowness of the bounds within which his personal ministry was confined, and the smallness of the results which, during its continuance, that ministry realized, were often as a heavy burden pressing upon the Redeemer's spirit. As a son, indeed, he learned obedience; he willingly submitted to the restraints laid on him; he cheerfully conformed to the will of Him that sent him, and expended his personal labors upon the lost sheep of the house of Israel—but not without many an inward thought of the joy set before him, of the harvest yet to be gathered in, of the glory yet to be revealed—thoughts kept buried in his heart, not at first to be uttered, for who could understand or sympathize? But here, at last, on the very eve of his agony and death, these Greeks, these Gentiles, come desiring to see him. He hails them as the representatives of the vast community to which they belong. In their coming to him he sees the first-fruits of that rich harvest which the world in all its borders was to yield. The great future of the gospel times and ages, hidden from all others, brightens into its full glory before his eye. The time, he knows, is near—he takes this very message from these Greeks as the token of its approach—when the mystery shall be revealed, and the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile shall be broken down, wide over all the earth the glad tidings of salvation in his name go forth, and men of all peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kindreds be gathered into that one fold, of which he is to be the Shepherd. But between the present and this great result there lay, now very near at hand, his own sufferings and death—the lifting of him upon that cross which is to serve as the great means of gathering all men unto him.

Connecting thus, as was most natural, the petition of the Greeks

with the gathering in of the Gentiles, and that gathering in with his own approaching death, Jesus answered and said: "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." Take a single kernel of seed-corn: there dwells within it the mysterious principle of life—the gift of the Creator that no man can bestow. Keep it above the ground, preserve it carefully from the touch of death and of corruption, it may abide for years, retaining its own vitality; but it so abides in solitary unfruitfulness—no life comes out of its life. Bury it, however, beneath the sod; let it pass down into what becomes to it the realm of corruption and of death; let it rot and die there: then from out that death the new life cometh—fresh, abounding, multiplying life. So it is, and so only, that it bringeth forth much fruit. And of the world's great spiritual harvest Jesus is the one seed-corn. He had the life in himself, and might have kept it for ever there. But to turn it into the source of life to others he too must obey the law of life, propagating itself and spreading abroad through death. He too must die, that by dying he may bring forth much fruit.

—The death of the Redeemer stands by itself; in a manner peculiar to itself the source of spiritual life to all united to him by faith. And yet there is a sense, and that a most real and important one, in which what was true of the head is true also of all the members. They too must come under the operation of the great principle and law which brings life out of death. They too must die, as he their Saviour died; must take up their cross in turn, and in self-denial and self-sacrifice bear it; they must have a fellowship with his sufferings; be planted in the likeness of his death; be crucified with Christ; must fill up what remains of his sufferings for his body the church. "For," said Jesus, immediately after having spoken of his own death and its great issues, "he that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." "If any man serve me"—be willing to become like-minded, like-hearted with me, look to my death as not only the fountainhead of his own spiritual life, but the model after which the whole temper, frame, and spirit of his being is to be moulded, then, added Jesus—"let him follow me, and where I am there shall also my servant be; if any man serve me, him will my Father honor." In the quick survey of the future that now engages the Saviour's thoughts, he sees beyond his death, realizes his position as exalted to the Father's right hand in the heavenly places—the shame and the dishonor, the buffeting and the scourging, the agony and the dying, exchanged for the glory he had

with the Father before the world was. A kindred elevation and like honors awaited all who took up their cross daily, and in self-denial and self-sacrifice bore it; sufferers with him here, they would be glorified with him hereafter.

Such as I have thus tried to trace it was the current of thought running through the first utterances of Jesus, given in answer to the announcement that certain Greeks stood without desiring to see him. But now a sudden change comes over the spirit of the Redeemer. His eye closes on the crowd around; he ceases to think of, to speak with man; he is alone with the Father. A dark cloud descends and wraps him in its folds; he fears as he enters into this cloud. From the midst of its thick darkness a trembling agitated voice is heard telling of a spirit sorely troubled within. Those of you who have watched by the bed of the dying must often have noticed how as the great event drew near foreshadowings of it came at measured intervals—a struggle, a faintness, a pallor so like the last that you held your breath as thinking that the spirit was about to pass. Death often throws such shadows of itself before, and the greatest of all deaths, the death of the Son of God, was also thus prefigured. The agony of the garden, what was it? It was but the spiritual anguish of the cross let down beforehand upon the soul of the Redeemer. The inward agony that wrung from the lips of the dying Jesus the bitter cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” was the same in source, in character, in object, with that which forced the thrice repeated prayer, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” And the closing sentence of Gethsemane, “Not my will, O God; thy will be done,” is it not a softened echo of the last and loud triumphant exclamations, “It is finished. Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit”? Still more striking, however, is the likeness between what took place visibly, audibly here within the temple, and what happened two days afterwards in the solitude of the garden. The correspondence is too close to be overlooked. You have in each case the struggle, the prayer, the triumph, following each other in the same order. “My soul,” said Jesus to the three disciples as he passed into the interior of the garden, “is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” “Now,” in the hearing of the company within the temple, he said, “now is my soul troubled.” “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me,” is the prayer in the one case; “Father, save me from this hour,” the prayer in the other. And the conflict is hushed, and the troubled spirit sinks to rest in the one case, saying, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt;” and in the other, “But for this cause came I unto this hour; Father, glorify thy name.”

"Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." Twice before—at the baptism in the Jordan, and the transfiguration on the mount—the same voice had been heard. But this third instance has more of publicity, if not of solemnity, attending it. At the baptism there were few present, and we may reasonably doubt whether any but John and Jesus saw the descending dove, and heard the voice from heaven. At the transfiguration there were present only the chosen three; but here, in the temple, before a listening crowd, in answer to a public and solemn appeal, this voice gives its crowning accrediting testimony.

This testimony given, the cloud disperses, the divine colloquy between the Son and the Father ceases. Christ's thoughts return to earth, to flow once more along the channel into which the application of the Greeks had led them. First he turns aside for a moment to correct the misapprehension of some of the spectators. It had been here as it was on the occasion of Paul's conversion on his way to Damascus. Some had heard but a confused noise, and would have it that it was nothing more than a common peal of thunder that had sounded above their heads; others had made out that it was a voice, but not catching the words, or not entering into their meaning, would have it that it was an angel that in some unknown tongue had been addressing him. Jesus tells them that it was indeed a voice which they had heard, and that it had spoken not so much on his account as on theirs. Then, taking up once more the idea which runs as a connecting link through the whole of this passage, that the time had come for the completion of his great work, and the gathering up of its fruits, his eye glances over the whole realm of heathendom; he sees that vast domain given over to the great usurper, the prince of this world, the spirit of unrighteousness sitting in the high places and exercising an unhallowed supremacy. The time had come, however, for a world given over to wickedness to be judged, and for the usurper, who had so long held dominion over it, to be cast out. But how, and by what instrument? Not by night nor by power; not by bolts of vengeance flung at the ungodly; not by the hand of violence laid upon the usurper, and he dragged off with chains of iron binding him; no, but by another power mightier than his, drawing men away from him, dissolving their allegiance to him, linking them in love to God. "And I," said Jesus, "if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

Such, as foreseen and pre-announced by our Lord himself, was to be the effect of his crucifixion. It was to clothe him with a power over the spirits of men, unlimited in its range, omnipotent in its in-



fluence, designed and fitted to exert its benignant sway as widely as the human family is scattered. From the time that he was lifted up, by his cross, its triumphs and its attractions, by all that it so willingly holds out for their acceptance and for their imitation, Jesus has been bringing all men to him—men of every age, of every country, of every character, of every condition; the wise and the simple, the rich and the poor, the honored and the despised, Jews, Greeks, barbarians, Scythians, bond and free. He puts this cross into our hands; he bids us lift it up, he bids us carry it abroad. Ours the outward work of letting all men know and see who it was that died for them on Calvary, and what it was that by dying for them he has done. His the inward power to work upon the heart, and by that charm which neither space nor time can ever weaken, to win it to peace, to love, to holiness, to heaven.

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## IX.

### THE PROPHECIES OF THE MOUNT.\*

#### TUESDAY.

THE stormy collision between Christ and the chief priests at length was over. Jesus, calling the twelve around him, left that court of the temple in which the conflict had been carried on, not as one defeated or driven away by his adversaries, but clearly and avowedly as the victor. It looks, from the two incidents which followed, as if Jesus, his public teaching in the temple over, lingered yet a little while reluctant to take what he knew would be his last sight of its sacred interior. At last, however, sadly and slowly he departs. There was perhaps something marked and noticeable in the earnest looks Jesus was bestowing on the buildings. There had certainly been much in what they had just seen and heard to excite the attention of his disciples. Those last words of his address to the Pharisees ring heavily in their ears—"Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." What house is to be left so desolate? Is it this very temple in which they stand? What kind of desolation is to overtake that house? Is it indeed, as some words of their Master, spoken long before this time,

\* Matt. 24, 25; Mark 13; Luke 21: 5-36.

might seem to imply, to be destroyed? A dark foreboding of some awful catastrophe hanging over that sacred pile is upon their spirits; and one of them giving vague expression to the common feeling, and with some dim hope that something further, clearer, may be told, said, "Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" "See ye not," is our Lord's reply, "all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Distinct and unambiguous announcement!—One cloud of obscurity at least is rolled away. The solid, stately, sumptuous fabric on which all their eyes are fastened is to perish, from its very foundation to be overturned. But though this fact be thus made certain, how many questions as to the time, the manner, the causes, the consequences of it, would at once arise to trouble the disciples' mind. Their Master, however, is already on his way to the gate which leads out to Bethany, and they follow. Silent all and thoughtful they follow him; they descend into the valley of Jehoshaphat, cross the Kedron, begin the ascent of Olivet, have reached a height which commands the city, where Jesus pauses and sits down—as that accurate narrator Mark informs us, "over against the temple." It must have been near the very spot where, two or three days before, Jesus had beheld the city and wept over it, and through his tears had seen that sad vision of Jerusalem beleagured, and her enemies casting a trench around her, and compassing her about, and keeping her on every side, and laying her even with the ground, and leaving not one stone upon another. As Jesus and his disciples sat down upon the ridge of Olivet, the eyes of all would rest upon the sumptuous edifice before them there, across the valley, glowing now beneath the beams of the setting sun. The quiet spot, the evening hour, the serene attitude, his words so lately spoken, all conspire to draw the disciples' thoughts upon the dark and doubtful future. Gently approaching him, Peter and James and John and Andrew put to Christ the question, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

It is of the utmost importance, as throwing light upon the whole structure and meaning of Christ's answer, that we look into the inquiry to which it was a response. Taking up that inquiry with the information which we now possess, we should say that it referred to three distinct and separate events: 1. The destruction of the temple; 2. The coming of Christ; 3. The end of the world. But the men who made that inquiry had no clear idea of these three events being distinct and separate from each other. They had heard their Master,

and that very recently, speak of his impending sufferings and death, and of another coming of the Son of man, when he should be revealed in his glory. They had heard him say, "Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here which shall not taste death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." What a mass of difficulties was here for these men with their existing beliefs to unravel! Christ's coming to his kingdom they had always looked forward to as the issue speedily to be realized, when he should ascend the throne of Israel and rule upon the earth as earth's acknowledged sovereign. But somehow, between them and that issue were interposed those sufferings and that death the object of which they could not comprehend. They had always associated Christ's coming to his kingdom with the elevation of their country to the first place among the nations, and the restoring and purifying of their great sanctuary at Jerusalem; but now Jesus speaks of coming not to restore but to destroy. He tells them of a time when of all those great buildings of the temple not one stone should be left upon another. Was that to be at the time of his coming, and was the time of his coming to be the end of the world? Imagining that it must be so, and yet unable to see how it could be so, incapable of dissociating the three events, yet unable to harmonize what had been said about each, they come with all their obscurity and confusion of thought to Jesus, and they say to him, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

Look now at the reply of Jesus to this question, as given in the 24th and 25th chapters of St. Matthew, and ask yourselves how far did Jesus go in clearing away the doubts or misapprehensions which the complex question put to him involved. Did he at once, clearly and unambiguously, inform his disciples that the destruction of Jerusalem was at hand? that it would happen within the lifetime of men then living? Did he, separating between different future comings of his, some figurative, some personal, tell them that it was to his first figurative coming he had referred, when he said that there were some of those men standing before them who should witness it? Did he proceed to separate by a long interval of many centuries the coming to judge Jerusalem, from his coming to avenge his own elect, to gather them from the four winds of heaven, and set up his kingdom upon the earth? or did he separate again that personal advent at the beginning of the millennium, from the day of the world's final judgment, and the passing away of these heavens and this earth? So far from this, the prophetic discourse of our Lord is studiously and purposely so framed, that with no other

guidance than that which itself affords, we still might confound, as the disciples confounded, the three advents of our Lord. With the fulfilment of the first part in our hands, as an event long since gone by, we are able to mark the separating line which divides the first advent of Christ, that day of judgment of the Lord, from all others that are to follow. Had we, however, stood where the apostles did, had we had this great comprehensive draft or sketch of the future held up to our eyes, as it was to theirs, would it have been possible to discern even that dividing line? For how is this prophetic picture framed? Behind a foreground filled with signs and tokens of impending woes, there rises as the first summit of a mountain range the Lord's coming to visit Jerusalem in his anger; then, right over that summit, almost on the same level, but dimmer, appearing to the eye quite close to it—the intervening valley quite hid from sight—another summit is beheld, another judgment-advent of the Lord, a second, and, as many believe, even farther back, yet a third. What seems, however, especially to perplex the eye as it rests on this prophetic picture, is not only that events are brought close together which may be—some of which we now know are—actually distant from each other by many centuries; not only are marks and tokens of these intervening spaces wanting here, not only are all the events of the one class described in the same way, painted in the same colors, but each is used as typical of those which come behind, described accordingly in terms which appear to belong to its successor rather than to itself; and so it is that many readers have felt it to be impossible to determine of many of the sayings of the discourse, whether they are to be applied to the first or second or third advent of Christ.

With these general observations, let us take up the discourse itself. It will be found that it divides itself into three parts, which on the whole correspond to the three inquiries which are virtually involved in the question of the disciples: the first part, from the beginning of the 24th chapter to its 29th verse, being occupied with the destruction of Jerusalem; the second, from the 29th verse of the 24th chapter to the 30th verse of the 25th chapter, being occupied with the Lord's advent to establish and set up his kingdom upon the earth; and the third, from the 31st verse to the end of the 25th chapter, occupied with the final judgment and the end of the world. I shall have a word or two to say hereafter as to whether we should distinguish the second of these sections in any way from the third; whether there shall be any other future coming of Christ besides the one when he shall come to close the present order of things. Mean-



while let us turn our thoughts to that portion, the easiest certainly to be understood, which sets forth the coming siege and ruin of the holy city. When shall these things be? when shall Jerusalem be destroyed? Jesus does not satisfy the curiosity that had respect alone to the date of the event, which would like to know how many years it would be till the ruin of their ancient city was accomplished; but he gives them, not one, but many signals of its approach. False Christs were to arise, there were to be wars and rumors of wars, and earthquakes in divers places, and famine and pestilence, and persecution of themselves. These, however, were to be but the beginning of sorrows; they were to regard them as so many tokens that the end was drawing on. The ten verses from the 4th to the 14th are occupied with the detail of these. All who have access to the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus, can easily satisfy themselves how fully and accurately all these tokens were verified during the years which lay between the ascension of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem.

Without referring to historic details, let me rather ask you to notice how Christ subordinates the prophetic intimations which he makes to the instructions, warnings, consolations with which he accompanies them. Does he speak of false Christs appearing? he prefaces that prophecy by saying, "Take heed that no man deceive you." Does he speak of coming wars and rumors of wars? he adds, "See that ye be not troubled." Does he detail the sufferings to which his own followers during that interval are to be exposed? he follows it up by the assurance that he who shall endure to the end shall be saved. It was not so much to prove his prophetic power, not so much to gratify their desire that some pre-intimation of the approaching event should be given them, as to forewarn and forearm them against the spiritual dangers to which they were exposed, that Jesus entered on these details.

Even here, however, in the first section—whose reference to the proximate event of the destruction of Jerusalem no one can doubt—we have instances of that double sense of the Lord's sayings, their applying to the incident more immediately alluded to, yet carrying along with them an ulterior reference to the future and kindred one with which in the broad delineation it is conjoined. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved:" the primary signification here is, that he who, through all these seductive influences of false prophets, through all these wars and rumors of wars, through all these fiery trials of persecution, should hold fast his fidelity, would be delivered from that destruction which was to descend upon Jerusa-

lem; the secondary signification, one which extends to every period of the Church, and to every one who abideth faithful unto death, holds out in promise, the greater, the spiritual, the everlasting salvation. Again, the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached for a witness unto all nations. In their primary sense these words received their first fulfilment anterior to the destruction of Jerusalem. "Their sound," says Paul, speaking of the first missionaries of the cross, "went unto all the earth, their words unto the ends of the world." In another epistle, he speaks of the gospel which the Colossians had heard, as preached to every creature which is under heaven. But in a wider and more strictly literal sense, before the final advent which the first symbolizes, there was to be a diffusion over all the earth of the knowledge of Christ—the two signs here given of Christ's coming to destroy Jerusalem, a general apostasy, the love of many waxing cold, and a widespread dissemination of the truth, being, as we know from the other parts of the discourse, the very signs by which the second advent of our Lord is to be preceded.

But Jesus not only mentions certain signals by whose appearance they might be admonished that the great catastrophe was drawing on, he gives a token by which they might know when it was at the very door. He does this in order to dictate the course which they should then take in order to provide for their safety. "When ye shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing where it ought not, in the holy place," etc. In St. Luke's gospel it stands, "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies." When the two came into conjunction—the outward sign of the city being compassed about with armies—the inward one of some flagrant desecration of the holy place within the temple being perpetrated—they were to betake themselves to instant flight. And so great was the expedition they were to use, that he who was on the house-top was not to wait to come down by the inner stair to take anything out of the house, but, escaping even as he was, was to descend at once by the outer flight of stairs, which, in Jewish houses, led from the house-top to the street, and fly as for his life. We cannot now say decisively what the abomination of desolation was; doubtless it was recognized by those for whose benefit Christ's words were spoken. We know, however, that two years before the city was invested by Vespasian, a Roman army, under Cestius Gallus, approached and invested it. It strangely enough happened that as Titus surprised the city at the time of the passover, Cestius surprised it during the feast of tabernacles, when all

the male population of Judea was collected in the capital. As there can be little doubt that the Hebrew converts to Christianity continued to observe the greater ceremonies of their ancient faith up to the time of the fall of Jerusalem, they too would be there along with the rest. They would see Jerusalem compassed with armies, and when, coincident with this there was some desecration of the holy place, they would know that the time for their flight had come. The siege by Cestius was sent as a warning to them, as the after siege was sent as a punishment to their unbelieving countrymen. It occurred in the month of October, one of the mildest in the Jewish year. Their flight, therefore, was not in the winter. It has been proved that the day on which Cestius unexpectedly, and in a panic which never could be accounted for, suddenly called off his troops, and entirely retreated from the city, was a Tuesday. Their flight, therefore, was not upon the Sabbath. Our Saviour's direction that they should pray that neither of these two things should happen to them, what was it but a prayer on his part that they should be exposed to neither of these calamities in their flight? a prayer which in mercy was granted.

"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." Matt. 24:21. The history of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem is a dark picture of horrors, illumined by most extraordinary displays of heroism. I do not know whether we are to receive the words of Jesus in describing it as if they were to be exactly and literally verified, or whether we are to take them, as we must take so many declarations of holy writ, as being true not so much in the letter as in the spirit. Certainly, however, neither before nor since have we read of so many men—upwards, Josephus tells us, of a million—perishing within a single city during its siege. Nor can a parallel easily be found to some of the horrible incidents realized within those beleaguered walls. Take, for instance, the description given by Dean Milman of the effects of the famine. I quote the passage, as containing not merely a fulfilment of this prophecy of Christ, but of another and still earlier prophecy of Moses:

"Every kind feeling, love, respect, natural affection, were extinct through the all-absorbing want. Wives would snatch the last morsel from husbands, children from parents, mothers from children. . . . If a house was closed, they supposed that eating was going on, and they burst in and squeezed the crumbs from the mouths and throats of those who were swallowing them. Old men were scourged till they surrendered the food to which their hands clung desperately,

and even were dragged about by the hair till they gave up what they had. Children were seized as they hung upon the miserable morsels they had got, whirled around and dashed upon the pavement. Tortures which cannot be related with decency were employed against those who had a loaf or a handful of barley. . . . The very dead were searched as though they might conceal some scrap of food. The most loathsome and disgusting food was sold at an enormous price. They gnawed their belts, shoes, and even the leather coats of their shields. Chopped hay and shoots of trees sold at high prices. Yet what were all these horrors to that which followed? There was a woman of Peræa, from the village of Beth-ezob, Mary the daughter of Eleazer. She possessed considerable wealth when she took refuge in the city. Day after day she had been plundered by the robbers, whom she had provoked by her bitter imprecations. No one, however, would mercifully put an end to her misery, and, her mind maddened with wrong, her body preyed upon by famine, she wildly resolved on an expedient which might gratify at once her vengeance and her hunger. She had an infant that was vainly endeavoring to obtain some moisture from her dry bosom. She seized it, cooked it, ate one half and set the other half aside. The smoke and the smell of food quickly reached the robbers; they forced her door, and with horrible threats commanded her to give up what she had been feasting on. She replied with horrible indifference that she had carefully reserved for her good friends a part of her meal. She uncovered the remains of her child. The savage men stood speechless, at which she cried out with a shrill voice, "Eat, for I have eaten; be not more delicate than a woman, more tender-hearted than a mother; or if ye are too religious to touch such food, I have eaten half already, leave me the rest." They retired, pale and trembling with horror. The story spread rapidly through the city, and reached the Roman camp, where it was first heard with incredulity, afterwards with the deepest commiseration. How dreadfully must the words of Moses have forced themselves upon the minds of all those Jews who were not entirely unread in their holy writings: "The tender and delicate woman among you, who would not adventure the sole of her feet upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil towards the husband of her bosom, and towards her son, and towards her daughter, and towards her young one that cometh out from between her feet, and towards her children which she shall bear; for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly, in the siege and straitness wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates."



Such were the horrors from witnessing and sharing in which it was the benevolent intention of our Lord, by these prophecies, warnings, and directions, to shield the faithful few who should bear his name and profess his religion in the midst of their unbelieving countrymen. The care and foresight of their divine Master thus placed them on an eminence whence they might discern beforehand the gathering of the great storm, might quietly watch its gradual advances, and ere it burst upon their heads find safety in a timely flight. Nor was the solicitude of the Saviour expressed in vain. It has been a tradition of the Church from the earliest ages that not a single Christian Jew perished in the siege of Jerusalem. While we turn therefore to this discourse of our Redeemer, as presenting so striking a monument of his prescience, we turn to it with still greater pleasure as presenting a monument of that affectionate, foreseeing, providing love he bears to all his faithful followers. Neither shall any of these his little ones perish; for them too, when straits and dangers press them round, the way of escape shall be opened. They shall lift up their eyes to the hills, whence cometh their aid. They shall dwell on high, and their place of defence shall be the munition of rocks.

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X.

THE PROPHECIES OF THE MOUNT.\*

TUESDAY.

"TELL us," said his disciples to Jesus as they sat with him on the mount, "when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Imagining that they would be nearly, if not altogether contemporaneous, they mixed up all the three events: the destruction of Jerusalem, the coming of Christ in his kingdom and glory, and the end of the world. How easy it had been for Christ to have corrected their errors both as to events and dates, to have told them plainly and explicitly that the destruction of Jerusalem was to precede by many centuries his second coming and the end of the world. Instead of this he leaves their errors uncorrected, allows the confusion that was in their minds to remain. Nay more, in his reply he so speaks of his coming to judge the world as to make it impossible for his disciples at the time, and in the position they then occupied, to

\* Matt. 24 : 29-44 ; Mark 13 : 25-37 ; Luke 21 : 25-36

perceive that more than one such coming on his part was spoken of. With the siege and overthrow of Jerusalem behind us as an event long since gone by, we can understand the first part of our Lord's prophetic discourse delivered upon this occasion, and give to it its obvious and only possible application, by separating that first coming of Christ from all other after advents. But we stand to the remainder of the discourse very much in the same position in which the disciples first stood to the whole of it. And there is a question about that remainder which we now, I apprehend, are as little able yet to solve as the disciples upon Mount Olivet were able to conclude, from what Christ then said, that the destruction of Jerusalem was nigh at hand, but that an interval of centuries stretched out between it and the next great coming of their Lord.

The question to which I refer is this: Is there indicated in the yet unfulfilled part of this prophecy a middle coming of Christ—to be distinguished, on the one hand, from his coming to destroy Jerusalem, and to be equally distinguished, on the other, from his coming at the close of the present economy of things to judge the world? Many of our ablest expositors of Holy Writ believe that not only are traces to be discovered here of such an intermediate advent, ushering in the millennial reign, but that you cannot read this discourse consecutively and intelligently without discerning and acknowledging it. Let me refer to one or two of the proofs which this portion of Scripture, when compared with other parts of the prophetic writings, is supposed to supply in evidence of a coming of Christ anterior to and quite separate from his final coming to judge the world. In the twenty-ninth verse of the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel, certain premonitory signals of an advent of the Lord are given. The sun is to be darkened, the moon is not to give her light, the stars are to fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens are to be shaken. The advocates of the personal and premillennial advent of our Lord think they can demonstrate that, according to the structure and style of language adopted in the prophetic Scriptures, these are symbolic descriptions of great commotions, changes, and revolutions, political and ecclesiastical, which are to happen on the earth. Other Scriptures about which there is less ambiguity of meaning represent these as preceding the setting up of the visible, the millennial kingdom of our Lord on earth, an event carefully to be distinguished from the final judgment-advent. As the national and religious catastrophes here symbolized are spoken of in those other passages as taking place at some intermediate point along the line that stretches out into the future, and not at nor immediately

near the end of that line, so it is affirmed and believed that the coming of the Lord spoken of in the thirtieth, thirty-first, and immediately following verses of the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel, connected as it is with these catastrophes as its immediate precursors, cannot be the one with which the present state of things is finally to be wound up.

Again, this coming of the Lord is said to be for the purpose, not of gathering all nations before him, but of gathering his own elect out of all the nations, from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. In this gathering two are to be working in one field—the one is to be taken, the other left; two are to be grinding at one mill—the one is to be taken, the other left. The field then and the one reaper, the mill and the one grinder, are they not to be left, it is asked, as they were before? and is not this a description that applies far more naturally and truthfully to such a separation as would take place at the erection of the millennial kingdom than to the separation of the judgment-day? —

It is admitted that these and all the other like traces to be met here of a distinction between the second and third advents of our Lord are obscure; but then we are reminded that this whole prophecy is constructed upon the principle of so blending together the events that it covers, and making them so overlap and run into one another, that a broader and more marked line of separation is not to be looked for. It is difficult for eyes untrained to the survey of mountainous districts to detect the line that separates a distant range of hills from a higher one lying immediately behind it. As difficult, it is alleged, for an eye unpractised in the survey of the perspective of prophecy, as presented in the pages of the Bible, to detect that line which separates the second from the third coming of our Lord. Nevertheless, the quick-sighted and well-trained eye may in both cases be satisfied that it is a double and not a single object that is before it. In justice, besides, to the advocates of the premillennial advent, it must be added that the Scripture now before us is not the one upon which they rely as supplying anything like distinct or positive proof of such an advent. It would certainly need something much more definite than anything which meets us here to warrant the belief that such an advent is approaching. But if elsewhere in the Bible such positive proof exists, then it is alleged that the rendering of this prophetic discourse which represents it as portraying in regular sequence three judgment-comings of the Lord, opens up its meaning more fully, and gives greater order, consistency, and harmony to it, as a whole, than any other explanation supplies.

It may be so; we are certainly not prepared to affirm or attempt to prove the opposite. In order, however, to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion on the subject, to pass a judgment on it entitled to any weight, one would require to have studied thoroughly and patiently the whole circle of the prophetic writings, to have made himself master of the peculiar kind of language, figurative and symbolical, which is there employed, and in particular to have candidly weighed and balanced the strangely conflicting testimonies that have been adduced in favor of and against the idea of a personal and premillennial advent of the Redeemer. It so happens, however, that among those who have made this province of unfulfilled prophecy their peculiar study, the most various and the most discordant opinions prevail. They differ not only in their interpretation of individual prophecies, but in the systems or methods of interpretation that they employ. For some this region of biblical study has had a strange fascination, and once drawn into it there appears to be a great difficulty in getting out again. Perhaps the very dimness and doubtfulness that belong to it constitute one of its attractions. The lights are but few, and straggling and obscure. Yet each new entrant fancies he has found the clue that leads through the labyrinth, and with a confidence proportioned to the difficulties he imagines he has overcome, would persuade us to accompany him. Instead of inclining us the more to enter, the very number and force of these conflicting invitations serve rather to repel. We become afraid of getting beneath a spell that somehow or other operates so powerfully, so engrossingly upon all who yield themselves to its influence.

— Apart, however, from any such timidity, (which would be censurable if the questions raised were ones that could be settled,) I cannot think that there are sufficient materials in our hands for arriving at any clear and definite conclusion as to the time and the manner of the yet future advents of Christ. Nay, more, I am convinced that it was never meant by the framer of the prophecies regarding them that any distinct vision of the future should, by help of them, be obtained by us. They are couched in the language peculiar to prophecy, of which this is a distinctive feature—that you cannot, by mere inspection, positively say whether each and every announcement is to be taken literally or figuratively; and if figuratively, how it is to be fulfilled. It is so far true that the part already accomplished does put into our hand a key, by help of which the part yet unaccomplished may be partially understood. It is, however, but a little way that we can be thus helped on; for the prophecies are not framed throughout after one uniform mould or pattern, so that if you can unlock one



portion, you can unlock the whole. There is such variety of construction in the different parts, that much must remain of double or doubtful import, till the interpreting event occurs. It has been so with all that section of the prophetic writings of which the fulfilments are already before our eyes. It must be so with all that lies over to be accomplished in the future. Who then shall tell us beforehand what is to be taken literally and what figuratively? In stating their case, the advocates on either side, for <sup>the</sup> premillennial advent, adduce certain passages <sup>which</sup> <sup>show</sup> that Jesus is the plain historic statements of what is hereafter to <sup>be</sup> the <sup>world's</sup> history of our globe, appear undoubtedly to prove what they are adduced to substantiate. But taken in the same way, passages are quoted on the other side which are in open conflict with these. The way in which either party attempts to remove the discordance is to assign a figurative sense to announcements which are at variance with those which they adopt as plain and simple narratives of what is to happen. All cannot be taken literally, neither can all be taken figuratively, without jars and discords; and take which side you may, it will be found that there are passages in such apparent and direct opposition to your conclusions, that you have to do violence to your own method of interpreting the others in order to get rid of their opposition. This is so unsatisfactory that on the whole we are not only disposed to hold our judgment in this matter in suspense, to wait till the event supplies the explanation, but we are inclined to believe that the obscurities and difficulties which now stand in the way of anything like a minute interpretation of the prophecies beforehand, were intentionally, and of set purpose, thrown around them by their utterer; that while there was enough to awaken inquiry and kindle hope, there might not be enough to enable any one to draw out a chronological chart of the future, or announce beforehand the exact dates of any of the great occurrences foretold. More than once our Saviour said to the disciples—and in so saying did he not teach us the chief use of prophecy?—"I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye might believe." John 14:29. And did he not, in the very midst of his foretellings of his own second coming, interject the saying: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man; no, not the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but my Father only"? Was the man Christ Jesus, in the days of his humiliation, himself kept in ignorance of that day and hour? It may have been so. As in childhood he grew in wisdom, knowing things this year that he had not known the year before, so in manhood revelations of the spiritual world may have been gradually communicated, and the knowledge of that day and hour kept in

reserve—kept in the Father's own hand till after his death and resurrection. Or it may have been, that though personally he knew, it was a knowledge not to be communicated. Anyhow, that day and hour were to have a cloud of obscurity thrown over them which neither men nor angels were to be permitted to see through.

But with all the obscurity thus intentionally thrown around the day and the hour, let us not forget that no obscurity whatever, no uncertainty whatever, <sup>is</sup> carried by the great event itself; that the same Jesus whom the <sup>crowd</sup> <sup>came</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>provide</sup> <sup>for</sup> the apostles' sight, as they gazed up after him into the <sup>lamps</sup> of <sup>light</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>illumine</sup> again the second time without sin unto salvation. Putting <sup>all</sup> <sup>intervening</sup> <sup>comings</sup> <sup>out</sup> of sight, we know that he shall come at the end of the world, and we know that our death is virtually the end of the world to each of us. In all that future which lies before us, these are the only two events of which we are absolutely certain: our own approaching death, our Lord's approaching advent. Our faith in the certainty of the one rests on the uniformity of nature; our faith in the other on the sure testimony of our Lord himself—a testimony that we put above the other, for he says, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." We must all die, and we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. Our eyes must close for ever on this present scene; our eyes must open to the scene of Jesus Christ upon this earth as our great Judge. The same double feature belongs to both: absolute certainty as to the event, entire uncertainty as to the time. We may die to-morrow; we may not die till many years hence. Christ may come to-morrow; may not come till many centuries hence. One might have expected that with all thoughtful men who believed themselves to be immortal, who felt themselves to be sinful and accountable, this double feature of the two events—events charged with such immeasurably important issues—would have stimulated to constant watchfulness, would have intensified solicitude, would have served to keep us humble, keep us earnest, keep us faithful. But alas for the thoughtless, careless, unbelieving spirit that is in us; we make the very things, so fitted and intended to work in us these salutary effects, minister to indifference and unconcern. All acknowledge that we must die soon. It is the common fate, we say, and put the thought of death away. We know not what a day nor an hour may bring forth; we are absolutely uncertain whether our next step shall fall here upon the solid earth, or there in the viewless eternity. We turn the very uncertainty into an argument for delay, and postpone preparation till the time for it may be gone. The truth is, that we naturally live here under a terrible tyranny—the tyranny

of the present, the sensible, the temporal; a tyranny but little felt by those who give themselves up willingly and wholly to its power. But, felt or unfelt, acknowledged or unacknowledged, it is one which must be met and be overcome, if we would share the Christian character on earth, or rise to the Christian blessedness in heaven. The future must carry it over the present; the unseen over the seen; the eternal over the temporal. Here lies the trial and here lies the triumph of the faith that is in Jesus Christ: for who is he that overcometh, but he that believeth that Jesus <sup>is</sup> the Christ? and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith—faith in the unseen Saviour; faith in his having lived and died for us on earth; faith in his having passed into the heavens, appearing there in God's presence for us; faith in his future coming to take us to himself. By watchfulness, by prayer, by all good fidelity to our absent Lord, let us nourish this vital principle of faith within us; so that when at last, whether it be through his messenger death, or through the signals of his own personal appearance, it is said to us, "Behold, he cometh!" the ready answer of our spirit may be, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

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## XI.

### THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS.\*

#### TUESDAY.

Two great duties lay on those to whom our Lord's prophecies as to his future advents were addressed—watchfulness and diligence. These duties he proceeded to illustrate and enforce in two parables to which a peculiar interest attaches, as spoken at such a time and to such an audience. The first of the two parables was that of the Ten Virgins.

Among the Jews the marriage ceremony was always celebrated at nightfall, and the marriage supper was given in the house of the bridegroom, and not in that of the bride. The bridegroom, accompanied by a select number of companions, his friends, goes to the house of the bride, to conduct her thence to her new home. The bride, with a corresponding attendance of companions, awaits his arrival, and then, the two bands united, the bridal procession moves on to the dwelling where the bridal feast is prepared. The ten vir-

\* Matt. 25 : 1-13.

gins spoken of in the parable are friends of the bride, and are waiting, either at her house, or some suitable place by the way, for the announcement of the bridegroom's coming, that they may join the marriage procession, go forward with it, and sit down at the provided feast. All the ten have lamps. This in every event was necessary, as it was only by lamplight or torchlight that the procession could move on. But these lamps of the ten virgins were not in all likelihood their own, nor carried by them only for the light they were to yield. As it was customary to provide wedding garments, so was it to provide wedding-lamps—such lamps of themselves marking out those who bore them as invited guests. Each of the ten virgins of the parable has got such an invitation to appear on this occasion as an attendant on the bride and has accepted it, and each holds in her hand the symbol of her character and office. Very likely the lamps were all of one material and pattern. Very likely the ten bearers of these were all dressed alike, and that, looking at them as they took up together their appointed posts, you might have seen but little if any difference in their outward appearance or equipment. Yet there was a great, and as it proved, a radical, a vital difference between them. Five of them were wise and five were foolish. The wise showed their wisdom in this, that they provided beforehand for a contingency which, however unlikely, they foresaw might possibly occur. The lamp furnished to them had quite enough of oil in it to last all the time that it was thought it would be needed. There was more than enough oil in it to carry the bearers from the one house to the other; and had all gone as it was first arranged—had the bridegroom come at the usual, the set time—the marriage lamp, with the ordinary supply of oil that it contained, would have been sufficient. But to the five wise virgins the idea had occurred that it was at least within the bounds of possibility that a delay in the bridegroom's coming might take place. Some unforeseen accident might occur, some unthought of hinderance be thrown before him on his way. To be prepared for such delay in case it should occur, they took with them other separate vessels besides their lamps, (Matt. 25:4,) containing a supply of oil in reserve, upon which they might draw in the event of what was in the lamp itself being all consumed. The foolish virgins showed their folly in this, that they were quite satisfied with the provision of oil made for them by their inviters, and never thought of supplementing it by any additional provision of their own. Perhaps the idea of a delay in the bridegroom's coming never occurred to them. It was a thing that but rarely happened. The idea of it would not naturally or spontaneously arise. It would do so only



to those who gave themselves purposely and deliberately to think over beforehand all that might happen, in order to be provided for it. Even if the possibility of some delay had occurred or been suggested to these foolish virgins, they would have satisfied themselves with thinking that it never could be so long as to burn out all the oil which their lamps contained. They were quite sure that all would go right; that the bridegroom would come at the right time; they were all too eager about the meeting, and the march, and the spread-out banquet to allow their minds to be troubled with calculating all the possible evils that might occur, and how they could be most effectually guarded against. But they were mistaken in their anticipations.

“The bridegroom tarried.” Taking the parable as a prophetic allegory, this is one of the many hints given by our Lord, even to the first disciples, that his second coming might possibly be deferred longer than they thought. He would not tell them how long; he would say nothing that should absolutely and wholly preclude the idea of his speedy advent, his coming at any time, to any generation of the living; but yet he would not have them so count upon his coming being at hand, as to make no preparation for his absence being prolonged, as to commit that species of folly chargeable upon the five foolish virgins.

And “while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept”—the wise and the foolish alike. Perhaps there may be a prophetic glance towards that which shall be the condition of the world at the time of Christ’s second coming—to the general surprise with which that event shall burst upon a slumbering, unexpectant earth. Whatever secondary allusion of this kind it may carry with it, you will notice that this slumbering and sleeping of all is not only what might naturally have been expected under the circumstances, but what is necessary to lead the story on to the contemplated issue. The delay had been longer than any one could have imagined. The bridegroom should have been there soon after the darkness had fallen. At midnight, had the set and common time been kept, not only would the procession have been all over, but the feast nearly finished. It had been with all the virgins a busy day, getting all things ready for so great an occasion. Was it wonderful that when, hour after hour, there was no signal of the approach, tired nature should claim her due, their excited spirits should fail and flag, their eyes get heavy, and that they should all slumber and sleep? Had there been no such sleeping, had all kept awake throughout, the foolish virgins, by the gradual consumption of the oil within their lamps, perhaps by

noticing also and reflecting on the provision in the separate vessels that their companions had made, would have become aware in season of the danger that was at hand, and might have provided against it. On the other hand, had it been the foolish only who slept, and while they slept had the wise been watching at their side, we could not well have excused them if, when the foolish awakened, they had charged their companions with great unkindness in having suffered them to sleep on, when they must have seen the catastrophe that was impending. We are disposed, therefore, to regard this incident as thrown in, rather in order to conduct the story to its proper close, than as having any distinct and peculiar symbolic signification of its own.

At midnight the cry came: "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." This cry rouses all the sleepers; all is haste and bustle now, as if there were an eagerness to make up for the previous delay. As they start up from their sleep, the ten virgins all see that their lamps, which they eagerly grasp, are just dying out. With the wise it is a quick and easy thing to clear and cleanse the wick, and to pour in a fresh supply out of their auxiliary vessels. A minute or two so spent, and their lamps are burning as brilliantly as at the first. Not so with the foolish virgins. They look despairingly at their fading lights. They have no fresh oil to feed their flame. The only resource in their extremity is to apply, in all the eagerness and impatience of despair, to their companions. "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out." But the wise had been as economic as they had been foreseeing. They had enough for themselves, but no such superabundance that they could safely and prudently supply their neighbors. "Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves." It was the only alternative left. But, alas! it failed; for while they were away beating up the oil-sellers, and trying to make a speedy purchase, the bridegroom came; the five that were ready passed on with him in the procession, went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut.

The ten virgins of the parable represent so many of the professed disciples of our Lord. Their common equipment, and their common attitude—all of them with marriage lamps in their hands, standing waiting the bridegroom's coming—tell us of that prepared and waiting posture in which all who call themselves by the name of Christ are or ought to be found, as those who are looking for the coming and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

It would, however, be unjust to this parable, and it would involve

us speedily in inextricable difficulties of interpretation, if we either took the ten virgins as representing the whole collective body of the visible church, or took the difference of conduct here displayed, and the difference of destiny to which it led—the final separation of the five wise and five foolish—as typical of those two companies which are to stand, the one on the right hand and the other on the left of their great Judge. Christ's object here is much more limited. He is urging throughout this part of his discourse the duty of watchfulness with regard to his approaching advent; and in this parable it is one form or kind of that watchfulness which he desires to inculcate. He does this by showing in an illustrative instance what special benefit it may be to him who practises it, and what painful consequences the absence of it may entail. The kind of watchfulness here so strikingly pressed upon our regard, and emblematically exhibited in the conduct of five of the ten virgins, is prudence, that reflective forethought, which busies itself in providing beforehand for emergencies that may possibly arise; the same virtue, transferred to spiritual things, which distinguishes the wise and the prudent of this world, who profitably spend many an hour in conjecturing what possible contingencies as to their earthly affairs may arise, and in contriving and arranging how each, if it do happen, should be met.

Among the children of the kingdom, the wise and the prudent are they who, having been called to that marriage supper of the Lamb, and having received the gracious invitation to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, prize the invitation so highly, and are so anxious that nothing should defraud them of the eternal blessedness to which it points, that they give themselves with all diligence to the consideration of all the possible risks that might come in the way of its finally being made good to them, and to the best methods of guarding against them should they occur. They look beyond the present, they anticipate evil before it comes, they strive to secure themselves against surprise, to stand forearmed to meet each enemy. Opposed to them, and answering to the foolish virgins of this parable, are those thoughtless disciples, who, satisfied with having got the invitation, and with being ranked among the number of the invited, foresee no danger, take no precaution, and make no provision against it. We do not doubt that, underlying that distinction between such wisdom and such folly, which it is the special and exclusive design of the parable to show forth, there is another broader, deeper, and more radical distinction—even that which separates the nominal from the real, the false from the true professor of Christianity. You will soon find, however, (as numberless interpre-

ters have done,) that if you make that broader and deeper distinction, the one here set forth, you will not be able, except by the use of great and unseemly violence, to make the story tally with the interpretation. A lamp is about as good an emblem of visible Christianity as one could wish, and so it is very natural to regard the ten lamp-bearers of the parable as standing as representatives of the entire visible church; and the oil which feeds the lamp is also an apt emblem of that special quickening grace of God's Spirit, (frequently in the Bible spoken of as an anointing with oil,) the infusion of which into the heart makes the true Christian to differ from the mere nominal professor. But if that were the difference intended to be symbolized here by the lamp and the oil, it ought to be a lamp without any oil, or a lamp with a different kind of oil in it, which represented the mere nominal profession, the show without the substance of true piety. But not only are the lamps of all the ten virgins alike, they are all filled at first, and filled with the same kind of oil, and burn with the same kind of flame. It is not for bringing with them oilless, lightless lamps, it is not for filling them with some spurious kind of liquid, sending up only smoke and stench instead of the pure and lambent flame, that the foolish virgins suffer so great a loss. It is simply and solely for not having a sufficient supply of the oil laid up beforehand. If, notwithstanding the difficulty which stands in the way of such interpretation arising from the fact that the foolish as well as the wise have some oil in their lamps, we still cling to the idea—which it is difficult for us to discard, it is so just and so pleasing—that this oil does represent the grace of the Holy Spirit, would not the fair and indeed only conclusion from this parable be, that there is a certain equal measure of this grace bestowed at first on all alike, such as Romanists believe to be bestowed at baptism, and that the difference between the lost and saved, between true and false Christians, hinges not on the kind but on the quantity of the grace possessed, on the one laying up a separate and sufficient stock beforehand, on the other neglecting to do so? But even were we prepared for such a view of the parable as would involve such consequences, where could the spiritual parallel be found to the separate vessels in which the reserve supply is treasured?

Instead then of taking the oil as an emblem of the Spirit's regenerating grace, and the lamp as an emblem of the outward form or profession of discipleship, and then trying to give a corresponding spiritual meaning to the different incidents of the story, and to make the difference finally brought out between the wise and the foolish virgins tally with the difference between all those into whose hearts the



heavenly grace has come, and all in whom it is wanting—is it not wiser and better here, as in the interpretation of so many of our Lord's parables, to confine the parable within its own proper bounds, and, looking at its broad and general object, to take it as designed to impress upon our hearts the great need of a wise and watchful forethought, the great danger to which the want of this forethought exposes, the sad and awful issues to which it may conduct?

Let us return now to the parable, and take up the closing incidents about the marriage, as to which there can be no uncertainty. "The bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage." The future, the everlasting blessedness in store for all the true followers of Christ, is spoken of here, as so frequently elsewhere, as a royal banquet or feast. "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." Scene of unrivalled glory, of exhaustless joy; rich and rare the food provided for the guests in the great banqueting-hall of immortality! Other viands at other feasts soon pall on the sated sense; but for those viands upon which the spirits of the blessed shall for evermore be nourished up into a growing likeness unto God, the appetite shall ever grow quicker the more that is partaken, and the relish be ever the more intense. The companionship at other festivals finally wearies; sooner or later we begin to desire that it should close; but in the hallowed unions and fellowships that shall be there, new sources of interest, new springs of delight shall be ever opening, each coming to know the other better, and each fresh access of knowledge bringing fresh access of love, and confidence, and joy. Other feasts are broken up, and sad and dreary is the hall where hundreds met in buoyant joy, when, the guests all gone, the lights grow dim, and darkness and loneliness take the place of the bright smile and ringing laugh. But that marriage supper of the Lamb shall know no breaking up, its tables shall never be withdrawn, its companionship shall never end.

"They that were ready went in: and *the door was shut*." What a surprise, what a disappointment, the five foolish virgins must have met with when they came and found that already the bridal party had entered, the bridal supper had commenced, and that the door was closed against their entrance! They had been invited to this marriage feast, and they had accepted this invitation, as special friends of the bride. The idea of their being excluded from the banquet had never entered into their minds, no, not even after their lamps had gone out. True, they had not taken the same precaution with their wiser companions, but who could have predicted so tedious a delay? True, they had not been able to join the pro-

cession at the first, but now they have got fresh oil, and their lamps are burning as brightly as at first. The door is closed against them—surely by inadvertence; it had not been perceived that they still were wanting to complete the company. They knock, the door opens not; they hear the bridegroom's own voice within, the very voice of their inviter. With an eagerness in which fear begins to mingle, they cry out, "Lord, Lord, open to us." The only answer they get is, "Verily, I know you not;" an answer which too plainly tells them that within that joyous dwelling they never shall set foot.

The warning here strikes home upon us all. We too have heard the invitation of our Saviour, and outwardly have accepted it. Our Christianity may be such as shall stand well enough the scrutiny of our neighbors, and as may open to us without any right of challenge admission to the table of communion. But how many are there among such professors of Christianity for whom a surprise as unexpected and as terrible is in reserve as met those foolish virgins! The man who never fears that it may be so with him at the last, who can hear about the door of heaven being shut against those who, up to the last, expected to get in, and no trembling apprehension come upon his spirit that he himself may be among that number, is the very man in whose person that terrible catastrophe is most likely to be realized. When we know that there is so great a possibility, nay, we may say, so great a probability of self-deception; when we believe that so many have practised that self-deception on themselves throughout life, and never have awakened from its illusions till they stood before that door of heaven and found it closed against them for ever; how diligent in self-scrutiny should each of us now be; how anxious that he possess not the name only, but the disposition, the character, the habits, the conduct of a true follower of Jesus Christ! Let us apply then to ourselves those most impressive words of Christ, "Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father that is in heaven. Many shall say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

— But that door which Christ himself here tells us will be closed at last against so many, is it not now open unto all? Yes. It stands before us, invitingly near, most easy of access, with this blessed inscription written over it, in characters so large that he who runs may read: "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

- How different in this respect from those other doors at which you see so many of our race stand knocking—the doors that lead to wealth, or fame, or ease and pleasure! These doors stand so far back, away from where the multitude are naturally standing, that many, in the rush and throng and pressure never get near them, though they toil to do so all their lives. Close in upon and around each of them what crowds are gathered, knocking so eagerly, so impatiently, often with such impetuous violence! They open, however, to but a few of all this number. For one that finds entrance there are hundreds that are kept without. Why is it that the great multitude will still keep rushing to these doors that remain shut against so many, while so few try that other door that remains closed against none? Is it that this gate to which our Saviour points us is so strait, the way that he would have us walk in, is so narrow? True, the gate is strait—but strait, why, and to whom? Strait, indeed impossible to pass through, to all who come to it environed with the thick wrapping of pride and worldliness and the spirit of self-trust. But strip yourselves of these, come naked and bare of them, come in all humility, with a broken and contrite heart, and you will not find it strait, but most easy of passage. True, the way is narrow, narrow for each individual traveller; but who that ever tried to tread it would wish it to be broader, to be so wide as to suffer him unchecked to wander away from God, or lapse into any transgression of that law which is so holy, and just, and good? Narrow as it is to each, that way has breadth enough for all to walk in it without any of that jostling, and striving, and sore competing toil which mark the broader way that so many take.

Enter ye in at that strait gate. Walk ever humbly, diligently, with careful footstep, with watchful wisdom on that narrow way, and then let the alarm rise when and how it may; let the cry strike the ear, "Behold, he cometh!" No shut door shall be before you. For you, as for your great Forerunner, for you because you follow him, the everlasting doors shall be lifted up, and the glad welcome given: "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

## XII.

## - THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS.\*

## TUESDAY.

THE parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds, afford material for very interesting and instructive comparison and contrast. They were delivered at different times, in different circumstances, and they carry with them internal evidences of these diversities. The parable of the pounds (Luke 19:11-28) was the last delivered by our Lord out of Jerusalem, that of the talents the last delivered in it. Jesus was on his way up to Jerusalem on the occasion of his last visit to the holy city. He had reached and passed through Jericho; large numbers had been attracted to him, who were full of vague expectations; and it was because they thought that the kingdom of heaven should immediately appear that he spake the parable of the pounds. That parable, as originally delivered, had a much wider scope and bearing than the parable of the talents. It was meant as a warning to the whole nation of the Jews, embracing those of that nation who were to receive and those who were to reject Jesus as the Messiah. He knew well the shock to which his approaching death and disappearance would expose all those whose ideas and hopes regarding him had been of an entirely secular character. He foresaw the latent enmity to him which would break out as soon as he was removed; and he knew also the many perils to which his own disciples would be exposed by so sudden and unexpected a departure—the evils which his continued absence was likely to produce. In the prophetic picture which the parable of the pounds holds up, both friends and enemies are introduced, and to both appropriate premonitions are given. Christ likens himself to a nobleman going into a far country to receive a kingdom, and to return. The idea is no doubt borrowed from Archelaus or some other of the Idumean family going to Rome to be invested with the royal authority, and returning to Judea to be acknowledged as the lawful sovereign. In going away, the nobleman calls his ten servants, the whole body of his domestics, and gives each of them a pound, saying, "Occupy till I come." But the action of the parable is not confined to those servants of the nobleman; it takes in all those citizens besides, who so soon as his back is turned, whatever may have been their dispositions and conduct



towards him when he was there in person among them, break out into open and undisguised hostility; and go the length even of sending a messenger after him, saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Again, on the return of the nobleman, having received the kingdom, after reckoning with his servants, and seeing and rewarding the diligence of those who had made a good improvement of the money committed to their care, the king calls for those his enemies who would not that he should reign over them, and has them slain in his presence. In the conduct of the citizens, and in the punishment of these who cast off his rule, the parable of the pounds embraces a class not covered by that of the talents, which has throughout to do alone with the master and his servants. This latter parable was delivered, not to a mixed audience, but to one singularly select. It was not merely that none but disciples were present, none of those for whom that branch of the story about rebellious citizens and their punishment was intended—there were none but apostles present. Now, corresponding to this, let us notice, that Christ stands represented here by a master who, on leaving, calls, it is said, his own servants, those who were his servants in some closer or more peculiar sense than was the case with ordinary domestics; and of those there are but three—both name and number indicating that it is Christ's connection with those who, like the apostles, were admitted to closer relationship, and had bestowed on them peculiar privileges, which is here more particularly illustrated. And this view of the more limited embrace of the parable of the talents is confirmed when we compare what the ten servants, (the wider household of the nobleman,) and the three servants, (the personal attendants of their master,) have committed to them, on the occasion of his departure. The ten, the more numerous body—representative therefore, as we conceive, of the general body of disciples—get all alike: each a single pound, a pound being but the twentieth part of a talent. It is the common possession, the common property, the common privileges of all disciples, what each and all of them have had bestowed on them by their great Master in the heavens, which is here set forth. On the other hand, the one, the two, the five talents given to each of the three servants, represent the larger but more special donations conferred, not on all alike, but in singular variety and in unequal proportions. That such peculiar bestowments of the divine grace are here pointed at may still further appear from what is said about each of the three getting one, or two, or five talents—each man *according to his ability*—his natural capabilities, whatever they may

be, not forming part of the talent or talents committed to his trust, but rather forming the ground and measure upon which, and in proportion to which, these are bestowed. As this master has three servants to whom, according to their original ability, he intrusts a larger portion of his goods than he would commit to ordinary servants, so the great Master of the spiritual household has those to whom, in the wider spheres of opportunity and of influence opened up to them, in the richer spiritual gifts and graces bestowed, qualifying them to fill those spheres, he assigns a higher function, as he looks for a corresponding and commensurate return.

Such seem to be legitimate enough conclusions from the different audiences to which the two parables were addressed, the different ends they were designed to gain, the different structure of their opening sections. Of far greater importance, however, than the tracing of any such nice distinctions—in which it is quite possible that we may go too far, is it to fix our thoughts upon that common, general, universal lesson embodied in both these parables. All of us who have made the Christian profession acknowledge ourselves as servants of an absent Lord. He has temporarily withdrawn from us his visible presence, but he has not left us with the bonds of our servitude lightened or relaxed. So far from this, do not these parables very clearly and significantly point to something peculiar in the interval between his withdrawal and return, marking it off as one of special probation? Let us remember that it is from the relationship which of old existed between a master and his slaves that the imagery of these parables is taken. A slave in those days might not only be called to do the ordinary work, household or out-of-doors, which fell to the lot of an ordinary domestic: but if he had the talent for it, or were trustworthy, his master might allow him to engage in trade, or to practise in any profession, the master receiving the profits, the slave reaping the benefit of better position and better maintenance. Were such a master, on going away for a considerable period from his home and country, to give three of his slaves who were thus employed, full and unchecked liberty in his absence to follow the bent of their own taste and talent, instead of prescribing for each of them a certain kind and amount of work which, under the eye of his overseer, day by day, and week by week, they were to perform, we would speak of this as liberal treatment, as a mark on his part of trust and confidence. But if, still further, such a master on the eve of his departure, were to summon his slaves into his presence, and supply them with a larger or a smaller capital to operate on, which capital they were left at perfect

freedom to employ each as he pleased, provided only that he employed it always as his master's capital, and kept the returns as his master's profits, whether such a procedure on the master's part be assigned to a selfish or to a generous motive, most certainly would place the servant in a new and peculiarly responsible position—put him upon a special probation. Such is the position which all true servants of the Saviour occupy; and such the probation to which they are now exposed. Our Master is not here personally to assign to us our different places and our different work; he is not here directly to inspect, and day by day, at each day's close, to call us into his presence and make the reckoning with us. He has retired from the platform of this visible creation; but not the less, rather indeed the more, are we under obligation to work for and to work under him; for has he not treated us with a generous liberality? has he not left us so to deal with that portion of his goods he has put into our hands as to each of us seemeth wisest and best? has he not left us to cultivate each the special talent he has bestowed? and broad and varied as the field of human effort, so broad and varied has he not made that field, in cultivating which we may still be serving him? has he not even warned us—however different our ways of life—against judging one another, saying to us, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth"? And has he not generously dealt out to us of his goods, leaving none of us, no, not the youngest, the weakest, the poorest, the least gifted, bankrupt of the means to serve him, without the single pound? The one, the two, the five talents, have they not been lavishly conferred? And we have accepted all as put into our hands by him, as still his; as ours only to be used for him as he desires. That, and no less, lies involved in our very profession as Christians.

"The Lord Jesus Christ, whose I am and whom I serve," one of the best and briefest descriptions of discipleship; yet how much does it include! All the greatest religious ideas and beliefs are simple; the difficulty lying not in the intellectual conception, but in the practical realization of them. Is it not so with the idea that we are servants—stewards, having nothing that we can absolutely call our own; nothing that we are left at liberty to dispose of irrespective of the will of the Sovereign Proprietor in the heavens. Easy enough in thought to embrace this idea; easy enough in words to embody it; not difficult to get an acknowledgment of it from every one who has any faith in God or Christ; it is so natural, so necessary a conclusion from the position in which we and our Creator, we and our Redeemer,

stand to one another. But truly, habitually, practically to carry the idea out; to regard our time, our wealth, our faculties, our influence, as all given us to be spent and exercised under the abiding, controlling conviction that they are ours but in loan, held by us but in trust, another's property assigned to us to be administered agreeably to his will and for his good and glory; let us all be ready at once to say how difficult we have felt it to frame our doings upon this principle; to live and act as the servants of that Master to whom, ere very long, we shall have to give in the strict account as to how every portion of that capital which he advanced was employed. The sense of accountability is universally felt—is so wrought into the tissue of our moral nature that you cannot extract it thence without the destruction of our moral being. Yet, alas! more or less with all of us, is it not as the voice of one crying in vain in the market-place, a voice pleading for the divine ownership over us, to which we render, when we pause to listen to it, the homage of respectful consent, but which is drowned and lost amid the other nearer, louder, more vehement voices which salute our ear.

But let us turn now to the reckoning and the reward. In the parable of the pounds—on the nobleman's return, he calls for those servants to whom he had given the money, to see how much each had gained by trading. The first servant approaches, and says, "Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said, Well done, thou good servant; thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities." A second servant says, "Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds." He repeats the same words to him: "Well done, thou good servant; thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over five cities." In the parable of the talents, the first servant comes and says, "Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents; behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." The second comes and says, "Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

We have but to put the two narratives together to bring out the distinction which is made in the reward conferred upon the two servants in the parable of the pounds, and the absence of any such distinction in the case of the two servants in the parable of the talents.



He who of one pound had made ten, gets the lordship over ten cities; he who of one pound had made five, gets the lordship over five—an exact proportion kept between the service rendered, the increase effected, and the reward bestowed. But he who doubled his two talents, though putting a less amount of gain into his master's hand, yet in the way of improvement of his powers and opportunities had done as much as he who doubled his five. You find no difference, accordingly, made between them; the praise and the award are the same with both. One can scarcely believe that the variation here is accidental and insignificant, it carries with it so striking a verification of the divine declaration, "Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor."

But while the primary and direct reward is thus meted out in such exact proportion to the zeal, fidelity, and success with which the original gift is employed, yet when the lost pound and the lost talent came to be disposed of, they were each at once handed over to the one who had most already, without respect to the previous service or increase. Had these been taken into account, he who out of two talents had gained other two would have had as good a claim to the forfeited talent as he who out of five talents had gained other five, while he who of one pound had made five, would have been entitled to a proportionate share of the disposable pound. All such claims, however, are overlooked. It is to him that hath the most that it is given, that he may have the more abundantly. In the curiously modified structure of these two parables, by that wherein they agree and that wherein they differ—how strikingly is the double lesson taught, that while each man's proper and direct reward shall exactly tally with his proper and individual work, yet that in the distribution of extra or additional favors regard shall be had to existing position, existing possessions, existing capability; that the awards of heaven shall be adjusted in duplicate proportion to the service previously rendered, and to the capacity presently possessed.

Let us not pass without remark the free and unconstrained, the warm and generous commendation which is expressed in the "Well done, good and faithful servant." Doubtless there had been deficiencies; these servants had not always been as diligent as they might have been; many an opportunity had they let slip unimproved; many a time had they been idle when they should have been active, slothful when they should have been watchful; and even in their most diligent endeavors to turn to best account their master's means, an eye that very curiously scanned all their motives might easily have detected imperfections and flaws. But their generous Lord and Mas-

ter does not in the day of reckoning go back thus upon the past to drag out of it all that could be brought up against them. He takes the gross result, and sees in it the proof and evidence of a prevailing fidelity. Ungrudgingly, and without any drawback, he pronounces his sentence of commendation, and bestows his rich rewards. No earthly lord or master, in fable or in fact, on any day of reckoning, ever dealt so generously with those who had tried to serve him, as our heavenly Lord and Master will deal with us, if honestly, sincerely, devotedly, though with all our manifold imperfections, we give ourselves to the doing of his good and holy will.

These good and faithful servants thus commended and thus rewarded, are they not held out as examples and encouragements? Is it wrong then to work the work of him that hath sent us into this world, or to be animated to increased diligence in that work, in order that we too may receive a similar commendation and share a like reward? Does any caution and reserve in the employment of such an argument—the holding out of such an inducement—mark the writings of the New Testament? Do the inspired teachers, when they hold up the rewards of immortality before our eyes, surround the exhibition with warnings against the imagination that any work of man can have any worth or be at all rewardable in the sight of God? Do they think it necessary to check and to guard every appeal of this kind which is made by them? Listen to the manner in which St. Paul speaks on this subject: “Let no man beguile you of your reward. Be not deceived, God is not mocked. He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, and he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. Let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord.” Hear the manner in which St. Peter speaks to those who had obtained like precious faith with himself: “Wherefore, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. . . . For if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” “Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.” Above all, listen to the frequency, the particularity, the earnestness with which our Lord and Saviour himself urges this consideration

upon his disciples. Would he comfort them under the world's reproach? "Blessed are ye," he says, "when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake; rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven." Would he warn them against ostentation in religion—against being led away by the example of those who, by making long prayers, prayers in the synagogues and corners of the streets, enjoyed a large popular reputation for piety? "But thou, when thou prayest," he says, "enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." Would he stir them up to works of love, to deeds of compassion? "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward, and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward; and whosoever shall give a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you he shall in no wise lose his reward." Nor has the Saviour's language changed, when after his ascension he shows himself to the beloved disciple. Among the latest of all Christ's reported words are these: "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Is heaven, then, to be represented as a place our right to enter which is to be won by our good works? No; to set forth heaven as a reward to be secured by human effort, by human worth, is a very different thing from setting forth a reward in heaven as that which is to crown every act of love and service which the Christian renders. Scripture never does the former. The sinner's acceptance with God, his title to eternal life, it attributes solely and exclusively to the merits of the Redeemer. From the office of justifying us in God's sight, our own works, of whatever kind they be, are absolutely and utterly excluded. But this does not imply that all the works of one who has not been justified, are utterly valueless and vile. The strict morality of that young man whom Jesus looked on, and whom Jesus loved, was not thus valueless, was not thus vile in the Redeemer's sight, and neither should it be in ours. Still less does it imply that the works of one who has been justified can have no such worth or merit as to be in any way rewardable. In the strictest sense of the term, no creature, however high and holy, can merit anything at the hands of its Creator—that is, claim anything from God properly as his due; for what has he that he has not received? and whatever he do, he does but

what God has a right to claim from him, and which consequently can give him no right to claim anything of God. But in that secondary sense in which alone we speak of worth, merit, rewardability, as attaching to human character, to human actions, you find in Holy Writ that the true Christian's works of faith and labors of love are spoken of as sacrifices acceptable, well pleasing to God, drawing after them here and hereafter a great reward.

There is no danger of urging to Christian work by a respect to the recompense of that reward in heaven which it shall bring hereafter in its train, if only we have a right conception of what kind of work it is that is there rewarded, and what kind of reward it is that it entails.

Had the servants in either of those parables which we have now before us been trading with the pounds or with the talents, in the belief that these were their own, or with the view of keeping the whole profits that they realized to themselves, the "Well done, good and faithful servant" would never have been pronounced on them, and into their hands no reward of any kind would in the day of reckoning have been put.

"Lord, *thy* pound hath gained ten pounds;" the one pound was his lord's at the beginning, and the ten pounds are his lord's at the end. It is this fidelity and zeal in the management of another's property for another's behoof which is rewarded by the lordship over the ten cities. And even so is it of all spiritual service rendered unto Christ. Whatever is its outward form, however like to that which Christ requires, yet if it spring from a selfish or mercenary motive, if it be done with no other aim than to secure a personal advantage, it comes not within the range of that economy of reward which Christ has instituted in his kingdom.

Again, the rewards which the good and faithful servants are represented here as receiving, consist in their elevation to rule and authority—a rule and authority not absolute or independent, not to be exercised for their own individual glory or their own individual good—a rule and authority to be held by them but as undergovernors, in subjection still to their Lord and Master, and to be exercised by them for the good of his great empire. The reward consists but in a higher species of the same kind of service which they had rendered. The wages they have earned are made up of a larger quantity and a higher kind of work. You may bribe a man to diligent and continued labor in a work to which he has no heart, and under a master whom he cares little or nothing for, by holding out a tempting wage; but then the wage must be different from the



work, a wage of a kind which the man covets, for a work to which he is indifferent, or which is distasteful. But who would enter the service of any master, if the only wage that was offered was so much more work to do? who but he who loved the work for the work's sake and the master's sake, and to whom, in consequence of that love to him and it, no more tempting offer could be held out than a larger sphere of labor and a larger power to fill it? Such, and no other, are the terms of the Christian service. Such, and no other, the wages that our Heavenly Master holds out to all the laborers in his earthly vineyard. Do you love that Master with all your heart? Is it the highest aim of your being to serve him? Is it the deepest joy of your heart when you are able to do him any service? Then, toiling laborer, look onward, upward to your heavenly reward. Now you often have but little liking to the spiritual service. Then your liking for it shall be so strong, you will never be able to keep your hand for a moment from the doing of it. Lazily, impurely, imperfectly is the work executed now; ardently, unremittingly, perfectly shall it be done then, and in such doing you shall enter into the joy of your Lord.

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### XIII.

#### THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.\*

#### TUESDAY.

"God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead." "The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son." "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." We might have imagined that all the ends of a judgment to come might have been gained by its taking effect on each separate spirit on its passage after death into the presence of the great Judge, its consignment thereafter to its appropriate condition. Besides this, however, we are taught that there is to be a time, a day specially set apart—at the resurrection from the dead, for the public, simultaneous judgment of our whole race. Having warned his disciples of its approach, Jesus proceeds to describe some of this great day's incidents.

His final advent for judgment is to take the world by surprise.

\* Matt. 25 : 31-34.

It is to come as in the night the thief cometh, as in the day the flash of lightning bursts from the bosom of the thunder-cloud. The day before its last shall see nothing unusual in the earth. Over one-half the globe the stir and bustle of life shall be going on as in the days before the flood. They shall be eating and drinking, buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage; the market-places full of eager calculators, the fields of toiling laborers, the homes of thoughtless, happy groups. In the quiet churchyard the group of mourners shall be gathered around the last opened grave, the coffin shall have reached its resting-place, and the hand of the gravedigger be raised to pour the kindred earth upon the dead.

— Over the other half of the globe the inhabitants shall have gone to rest; the merchant dreaming of to-morrow's gains, the senator of his next day's oration. Awake in his solitary chamber the student shall be writing at his desk; and in the banquet-room the lights shall be glittering, and the inviting table spread, and dance and song and ringing laughter shall be there. Just then, without herald sent or note of warning given, the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. That shout, the trumpet-call of heaven—that only sound that ever spanned at once the globe, and was heard the same moment at either pole—how at its fearful summons shall the sleepers start up, their dreamings all cut short! The pen shall drop from the writer's hand; and a shivering terror, like that which filled Belshazzar's hall, shall run through the banquet-room, and the jest half uttered, the song half sung, they shall stare at one another in pale affright! In the thronging market-place the buyer shall forget the price he offered, the seller the price he asked: in the toiling harvest-field, the stooping reaper shall look up, and as he looks, the last cut grain of earth shall drop out of his hand; and in the quiet churchyard the work of burial shall be stopped, and the mourners shall see a strange commotion in the grave; for it shall do more, that trumpet-blast of judgment, than waken all the sleeping, arrest all the waking inhabitants of the globe. It shall go where sound never went; it shall do what sound never did; it shall penetrate the stony monument; it shall pierce the grassy mound. Far down through many a fathom of the heaving waters shall it descend; over the deep bed of ocean shall it roll. And at its summons the sea shall give up the dead that are in it; and death and Hades the dead that are in them. Raised from their graves, the dead, both small and great, shall stand before the Lord. They shall "be caught up to meet the Lord in the air;" lifted up above that earth upon

which the renovating fire shall already be preparing to do its work. What a strange assemblage! The babe that had been born but an hour before; the ancient man who, in the times before the flood, had lived for nigh a thousand years; the first buried, the last buried, the half-buried—all the vast congregation of the dead mingling with the hosts of the living. And this great company, as it rises to meet the Lord in the air, is to approach another, it may be as large, descending from the heavens. For when the Son of man shall come in his glory to judge the earth, "all his holy angels" are to come with him. Heaven for the time is as it were to empty itself of its inhabitants; their shining ranks are to line the skies, their bright forms bending in eagerness over the impending scene. And yet another company, of other aspect, is to be there—those angels "which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day:" hell from beneath moved to meet the Lord at his coming; its demon hosts drawn up unwillingly into close proximity with those who once in the ages long gone by had been their associates in the heavenly places. Hell and heaven brought thus for once together, with earth coming in between, that from its intervening companies each may draw to itself all it can claim as properly its own, and then, with a contrast heightened by the temporary contact and the fresh accessions gained, to part for ever.

Soon as all the nations are gathered before him, the Judge shall send forth his angels, and by their agency shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and "he shall set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left." This separation shall take place in silence. Child shall meet that day with parent, and friend with long-lost friend; and parent shall part from child, and friend from friend—no welcomes given, no questions asked, no farewells taken. On him who fills that throne, set there for judgment, shall every eye be fixed, and in stillness deep as death shall each ear wait to drink in the sentence from his lips. Then, as in this mute and awful expectation all are standing, "shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Every clause, almost every word here, is rich in meaning.

"Then shall the King say"—it is a king, it is *the* King, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, who speaks. Visibly now before the assembled universe shall Jesus of Nazareth be enthroned. He who when here with us on earth, veiled his glory, took no higher title

than the Son of man, was content to stand before an earthly judgment-seat and be doomed to die—shall come now with power and great glory. He shall come, as we are told in one place, in his own glory; as we are told in another, in the glory of the Father. With all the essential glory of his native divinity, even that glory which he had with the Father before the world was—with all the additional accumulated glory accruing to him in virtue of his having triumphed over death and hell for us men and for our salvation, shall he be then visibly invested. He shall “sit upon the throne of his glory.” What this throne is as to its outward form and splendor, it may be idle to imagine. It is described in one scripture as a great white throne. Daniel, speaking of the appearance of the Son of man, says that “his throne was like the fiery flame.” He is to come, we are distinctly told, in the clouds of heaven. It was in a cloud that Jesus was borne up out of the apostles’ sight as they gazed up towards heaven as he went up, and the two men in white apparel, who stood by them, said, “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” Acts 1:11. It may be on a cloud-woven throne that Jesus shall then appear. If so, the clouds that form it shall have a brilliance brighter far than that of any which have ever floated in our skies; their splendor caught not from the shining on them of a far-distant sun, but coming from an inner glory too bright for human gaze, of which their richest lustre is but a dim shadow—that shadow serving as a veil to shade and drape it, so as human eye may look upon it. But whatever its substance, whatever its form, it shall be in sight of all, a throne—the throne of judgment, to whose occupant the great and solemn work, one for which omniscience is needed, which the Omniscience alone could properly discharge, has been committed. Doubts have been entertained by some of the true and proper divinity of Jesus Christ. When he comes, and is seen seated upon that throne with that royal retinue of angels around him, and undertakes and executes that mighty office of the Judge of all the earth, shall any doubts of his divinity be cherished then? How suitable a thing in the arrangements of the divine government does it appear, that he who submitted to all the scorn and the contumely, the suffering and the death, for our redemption, should thus, at the winding up of the world’s affairs, have assigned to him this office of trust and honor; that to him every knee should be made then to bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.



“The king shall say to those on his right hand.” To them he first shall turn, on them he shall first fix his eye; and when he takes the survey of that countless host stretching far and wide away, till it mingles with the crowd of angels gathering in and pressing near to those whom they wait to hail as members of the holy, happy family of the blessed, shall the spirit of the Redeemer not rejoice? In sight of the multitude that no man can number, from every kindred, and tribe, and people, and nation, all ransomed from sin and death through him, shall he not see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied? It may be—none can tell—over the very scenes of his earthly sorrows that he shall then hover. The approach to this world must be made along some definite line, towards some definite locality. And what more natural, what more likely than that the throne should rest above the eminence on which the cross once stood? And if, as he once more nears the places—now seen for the last time, ere they pass away amid dissolving fires—the sorrows of the great agony and death that he there endured should rise up to his thoughts, would not the sight of that goodly company of the redeemed on his right hand make the very memory of them to minister an abounding joy? He shall not be insensible to the triumph of his humiliation unto death which that day shall disclose. It shall be with no unmoved or unrejoicing spirit that he shall say, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

He shall say “*Come*,” with what different feeling, with what a different effect, from what once attended the utterance of the same word! He had said once to all the sinful children of men, “Come unto me, and I will give you rest.” But he had to accompany and to follow up the gracious invitation with the sad and sorrowful exclamation, “Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.” But no danger now of this invitation being rejected, no sorrow to shade the spirit of him who gives it. With all the exultation of one who asks those to come who he knows will be all ready rejoicingly to follow, does he utter the gracious word. “Come,” he says; and each foot-step is ready to advance, and each mansion in heaven “echoes back the invitation, as if impatient to receive its guest.”

“Come, ye blessed of my Father.” His redeemed are not to be recognized as those who have been plucked by him out of the hand of an angry God, whom it has taken the very utmost of service and sacrifice on his part to appease and propitiate. They are the blessed of the Father equally as they are the ransomed of the Son. It is with the Father’s full approval that they are invited to the realms of bliss.

His pity, love, and mercy provided the lamb for the sacrifice; and now that the first intentions of the redemption have been fulfilled in them by their entering into peace with him, and their drinking in of the spirit of his dear Son, his infinite benignity but waits to bless them in the full enjoyment of himself throughout all eternity. "Ye blessed of my Father." Here he pronounces the blessing who has power to make it good. We ask God's blessing on those we love; but, alas! we have not that blessing at command. It is often but the vague wish of a kindly nature for others' happiness which takes that form. It is at best but the expression of a desire, the offering of a petition, which it remains with another to grant or to refuse. But to be called the blessed of the Father by Christ the Son, this is to be made the very thing they are pronounced to be; and blessed for ever shall they be of him who made heaven and earth, whose large capacity to bless shall open all its stores, and lavish upon them all its bounties.

"Inherit the kingdom." It is a kingdom, nothing less than a kingdom, that is to be entered on, possessed, enjoyed. To rise to be a king is the highest object of earthly ambition. To ascend a throne is to reach the highest summit of earthly elevation. A crown is the richest ornament the human brow can wear. And what is the burden of the song of praise of the redeemed? "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests to God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." And what saith the Lord himself to all his faithful followers? "To him that overcometh will I give to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Whether in the condition of the redeemed hereafter there shall be anything of an outward kind, of position and prerogative, of authority and rule, corresponding to those of the kingly estate, we need not now inquire. A few dim and scattered hints upon this subject do meet our eye in the sacred Scriptures, upon which, if it were cautiously attempted, some plausible enough conjectures might be grounded. There is one kingdom, however, that we know of, into full possession of which those on the right hand of the Judge shall enter, the glory and the blessedness of which need no outward accompaniment to enhance them—the kingdom of which Jesus spake when he said, "The kingdom of God is within you;" that kingdom which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Within the heart of every true Christian this kingdom is even now set up and established. But here, even in its best estate, the empire of God

and Christ, of truth, of love, of holiness, is a sadly distracted and divided one. It is sustained by constant conflict; harassing always the inward strife, and varied the fortunes of this changeful war. But rejoice, all ye who have entered into this noblest of all conflicts, who, following Christ, walk under your great leader and exemplar ever before you, day by day, on this inward warfare. The rule of your spirit, the empire of your heart, you have given to the Lord that bought you and his family, undividedly, for ever it shall be. The struggle is a life-long one. The enemies, so many, so powerful, within and without, by whom you are so often overcome, are not for ever to haunt and harass and assault. At death they shall be driven from the field; after death they shall cease to have all power, and then, when on that great day you stand on the right hand of the Judge, then shall the full, the perfect, the undivided reign of holiness commence, and in every thought and affection and desire of your heart doing willing homage to the Redeemer, in every faculty of your being going forth in the utmost intensity of its exercise rejoicingly to do his will, the kingdom shall be yours, Christ shall reign in you, and you shall reign through him.

But this kingdom <sup>is</sup> to come to you by inheritance. It is not one that you are to win by your own efforts, that you are to acquire as if by right in virtue of any sacrifices made, any labors undergone, any victories achieved. It is to become yours by heirship, by the will of another, bestowed upon you as his children. You must first become children of God by faith that is in Jesus Christ, and, being children, then shall ye be heirs, heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. The title to the heavenly inheritance links itself at once and inseparably with our vital union to Christ our living Head. Let Christ be ours by a humble trust, a loving embrace, a dutiful submission, then heaven is ours by consequence as natural and necessary as the son is heir to the possessions of his parent. Look ever, then, on that rich inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, as the blood-bought purchase of the cross, the full completed title to which is one of the things freely given you of God in Christ, to be instantly and gratefully received in the very moment of your first believing. Let your hope of heaven base itself thus from the first firmly upon Christ, and it shall grow up into strength, and be indeed the anchor of your soul, sure and steadfast, entering into that within the veil.

The kingdom "prepared for you from the foundation of the world." The preparation of this kingdom for us, of us for this kingdom, is no secondary, no subsidiary device, no afterthought of God. The redemption that is through Jesus Christ our Lord is not to be thought

of by us as a scheme or plan fallen upon simply to meet and mitigate the evils of the Fall. The primary, the parent, the eternal purpose of the Supreme in the creation and government of the world, was to make and fashion here the materials out of which a kingdom was to be erected, to stand throughout eternity a glorious monument of his wisdom, mercy, righteousness, and love. For this the foundations of the world were laid, for this was sin suffered to enter, for this did the Son of the Eternal become incarnate; for this he lived, he suffered, he died, he rose again; for this are we all being passed through the sifting, testing, humbling, purifying, and sanctifying processes which make up the spiritual web and tissue of our earthly life. How weighty the argument to give ourselves heart and soul, all we are and all we have, to Christ, that in us and by us, the earliest, the dearest, the dominant design of our heavenly Father may be fulfilled. Shall we, by our indifference, our worldliness, our selfishness, our ungodliness, be parties to the defeating of this so ancient, so infinitely benignant purpose of the Most High? Should any of us doubt that if in simplicity of purpose we turn to Christ, and give ourselves to him, aught like repulse or failure shall await us? Will God refuse to do that in us and for us, the doing whereof to and for sinners such as we are has been one of the very things that from eternity has lain the nearest to his heart?

We know but little of what awaits us after death. It would appear, however, from all that the Scriptures say, that the first time that ever with bodily eye we shall look upon our Lord and Saviour, shall be on that day when he shall come sitting on the throne of his glory, when before him we and all the nations of the earth shall be gathered. If so, the first words that we shall ever hear issuing audibly from his sacred lips shall be these—may heaven in mercy grant it shall be as spoken of us, and to us, that they shall fall upon our ear—“Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”



## XIV.

## THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.\*

## TUESDAY.

Is Christ's description of his last coming to judge the world, as given in the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel, a parable like the three that precede it? While substantially true, that is, true as to the great fact that it announces and the great lesson it conveys, is it nevertheless to be taken as a story of the imagination, whose fancied incidents are but the drapery with which the hand of the great Artist clothes the fact and illustrates the lessons? We cannot believe so. The transition at the thirty-first verse from the style of the parable to that of plain and simple narrative is too marked to be overlooked or set aside. The Son of man, who takes the place of the nobleman and the bridegroom, is a real not a figurative character, and all that is said in the thirty-first, thirty-second, thirty-third, and thirty-fourth verses bears the marks of a faithful recital of what is actually to happen when the last day of the world's history arrives. But after the separation between the righteous and the wicked has been effected, is the Judge to enter upon such a formal statement of the grounds upon which the sentence in either case is based? and is there actually to be such a colloquy between him and those on his right hand and those on his left as is here recorded? We can scarcely believe this. It is difficult even to conceive how or by whom so great a multitude on either side could conduct such a colloquy with the Judge as is here recited. Nor is it necessary to believe that such verbal communications should pass to and fro in order to get at the true bearing and import of the passage. The Judge is represented as adducing a single test, the application of which to the righteous and the wicked brings out one great distinctive feature of the difference between them. It cannot surely be meant that the one point on which the sentence is made here to hinge constitutes the only one of which any cognizance will be taken, and on which the decisions of the day will rest; or, admitting that there are others, that it stands out so conspicuously above and beyond them all, that it alone is regarded as furnishing the ground and reason of the verdicts given. We are inclined rather to believe that the single point of difference between those on the right hand and those on the left of the Judge is fixed upon as in itself supplying one of the most delicate, most

\* Matt. 25 : 35-46.

discriminating, least fallible external proofs of the presence or the absence of that character of true discipleship to Jesus Christ, upon which the judgment proceeds. Outward acts or habits of the life, quoted and referred to by the Judge as the foundation of his judgments, could be so employed only in so far as they carried with them conclusive evidence as to the inner state of the mind and heart, only in so far as they were faithful and sufficient exponents of the inner springs and motives from which they flowed. But is there any kind or class of actions singularly and preëminently fitted, by their being always done by the one, and their being never done by the other, to mark off the true from the false, the real from the nominal followers of the Redeemer? I apprehend there is—the very kind and class of deeds which the Judge here lays his hand upon as characteristic of those standing on his right hand; for it is not any or every kind of feeding the hungry, or visiting the sick, or clothing the naked, that will meet the description here given. Those acts of compassion, love, and mercy which can alone truly and fully appropriate that description to themselves, must have these two peculiar qualities belonging to them: 1. They must be done to the brethren of the Lord, so done as to justify the strong and striking language, “I was a hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.” 2. They must be such that the doers of them were often, if not always, unconscious at the time that what they did was done unto Christ, else they could not honestly have answered as they did.

To whom, then, does Christ refer, when he speaks of the least of these his brethren, the rendering of any service to whom he reckons as so much kindness rendered to himself?—For an answer to this leading question I refer you to two other sayings of our Lord. The first occurs at the close of his address to the apostles on sending them forth, when, after laying down in the plainest and most emphatic terms the character and condition of the Christian discipleship, he went on to say, “He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet, in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet’s reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man’s reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.” Matt. 10:40–42. Here the kind of giving which is in no wise to lose its reward is not simply the giving to one of Christ’s lit-

tle ones—which any one might do unawares, giving simply to the thirsty without regard to what they were—but it is giving to them in the name of a disciple. The expression, “in the name of a disciple,” is in itself ambiguous. It might either mean giving as a disciple, that is, as one who bore that name or character ought to give, or it might mean giving to another because the other bore and possessed the character and name. There is another saying of our Lord which clears away this ambiguity, recorded in the gospel by St. Mark, chap. 9:41: “For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.” If this and the saying already quoted be accepted as containing the true explanation of the words spoken by the Judge, his citation must be restricted to acts of kindness done to Christ’s true disciples, on the specific ground of their character as such. There must be then some striking peculiarity attaching to such acts entitling them to be employed under such circumstances for so great and grave a purpose. Whatever this peculiarity be, we have advanced so far as to perceive that it depends on the connection between those to whom the kindnesses are shown and Christ. It must be therefore in the character of that motive which would lead us specially to sympathize with and to succor those standing in this connection. In common life there are two kinds of connection which one man may have with another, the existence of either of which might generate a claim upon our sympathy and help. There may be the connection of relationship, and there may be the connection of resemblance. You recognize the claim springing from the first of these when you say that you cannot see the son of your best benefactor, or of your old and faithful friend, in want, unpitied and unrelieved. You recognize the claim springing from the other when you say that one, so like in character, in principle, in taste, in habit, to the friend whom you admire above all others, to whom you are most tenderly attached, has a hold involuntarily upon your heart. Between the two there is this difference, that if relationship be the only ground on which you act, the idea of that relationship must be distinctly before your mind; whereas, if it be similarity of character that supplies the impulse to benevolence, there may be at the time no felt or conscious reference to the person, likeness to whom may nevertheless form the secret spring of your conduct. As regards the union between Christ and all his true and faithful followers, the two species of connection—of relationship and of resemblance—are not only invariably to be found together, but you have no other sure means of knowing where the one tie, that of discipleship, exists, but by obser-

ving where the other, that of likeness, is manifested. The living heart-union with Christ which constitutes the central essential element of the Christian character, is no bare external bond, such as earthly relationships so often are. It never does, it never can exist without more or less of the spirit of the Saviour himself being poured into the heart, more or less of a likeness to Christ being impressed upon the life. To discern the image of the Saviour so produced, in its dimmest and most broken, as well as in its fullest and brightest forms, and to feel the force of that attraction which this image exerts, the observer himself must have been fashioned into the same image, must have drunk in of the same spirit. But every one that loveth him that begat, loveth also all who are begotten of him; a secret sympathy, a bond of true and deep and everlasting brotherhood binds all together who are one in Christ—one in the participation of his Spirit; nor is it necessary to the force of that attraction being felt which draws them to one another, that a distinct or conscious regard be had either to Christ himself personally or to the common relationship in which they stand to him.

“Oft ere the common source be known,  
The kindred drops will claim their own,  
And throbbing pulses silently  
Move heart to heart by sympathy.”

You may love, you may pity, you may help one of Christ's little ones without having Him before your thoughts, just as you may admire the splendor of a broken sunbeam without thinking of the orb of light; nay more, the farther he and the relationship are for the moment out of sight, the more purely and entirely that the sympathy and aid spring spontaneously from seeing and admiring and loving in a suffering brother the meekness and the gentleness, the patience and the devout submission which Christian faith inspires, the clearer and less doubtful the evidence that the same faith dwells in your own bosom, working there like results. The charity which flows unbidden from that inwrought kindredship of disposition by which all true followers of the Lamb are characterized, waiting not, when it sees a suffering brother, to make the inference that his belonging to Christ confers upon him a title to relief—springs not from any anticipation of reward. It flows at once out of that love to Christ, supreme, predominant, which has taken possession of the heart. And hence the explanation of the answer which the righteous are represented as making to the declaration of the Judge—the simple, natural utterance of humility and surprise: “Lord, when saw we thee a hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?



when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came to thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."

— Should any one, then, under the impression that the first question to which in the great judgment he would have to give reply, would be this, "Did you ever relieve any of Christ's brethren because of their being such?" feeling unfurnished and anxious to provide himself with a sufficient and satisfactory answer, go forth immediately and seek out some destitute disciples and minister to their wants, would such a ministry of benevolence as that suit the requirements of the Judge? Assuredly not. You might to any extent feed the hungry, or clothe the naked, or visit the sick; those whom you thus clothed and fed and visited might be brethren of the Lord; nay, you might select them as the objects of your charity on that very account, and yet after all your charity might be but selfishness in disguise, utterly wanting that element so delicately and beautifully brought out in the answer of the righteous, of being the unconscious emanation of a true love and a true likeness to Jesus Christ. No charity of mere natural instinct, no charity of outward show or artificial fabric, no charity but that which is the genuine, spontaneous, untainted product of a profound personal attachment to the Saviour, will meet the requirements of the Judge. And the more you study the deeds to which he points, and which are here described, the more will you be convinced that a more truthful and delicate test of the presence and power of such an attachment could not have been selected than that which the performance of such deeds supplies.

Let us turn now for a moment to the sentence passed upon those standing on the left hand of the Judge: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." How striking the antithesis between this and the sentence passed upon the righteous! The "Come" of the one has its counterpart in the "Depart" of the other; "ye blessed," its counterpart in "ye cursed." But it is not, "ye cursed of my Father." The blessing had come from him. The Son as Judge attributes it to the Father. But the curse comes from another source. The Judge will not connect his Father's name with it. The wicked have drawn down the curse upon their own heads; its fountainhead is elsewhere than in the bosom of eternal love. The kingdom, upon the inheritance of which the righteous are called to enter, is not spoken of as an everlasting kingdom. There was no need of so describing it; by its very nature

it is a kingdom that cannot be shaken, can never be removed. But the fire is called an everlasting fire, to remind us that so long as ever in the bosom of the sinful the fuel for that flame exists, it must burn on, the ever sinning bringing the ever suffering with it in its train. But here again there is a variation of the phrase. In the one case it is a kingdom prepared for the righteous themselves from the foundation of the world; in the other it is a fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Can we believe this variation to be unintentional and insignificant? Shall we not gladly accept the truth that lies concealed in it, that God delighteth in mercy, and that judgment is his strange work?

— Then follows the colloquy between the Judge and the condemned, by far the most impressive thing in which, to our eye, being this, that the Judge does not in their case bring forward an opposite and contrasted kind or class of actions to confront with those attributed to the righteous, in order to indicate the presence within of an opposite character, the operation in them of an opposite class of motives. Against the cited deeds of mercy he does not set up as many deeds of selfishness, or unkindness, or cruelty. He puts the whole stress of the condemnatory sentence simply and alone upon the non-performance of the service of love to his brethren, and through them to himself. Had it been a merely moral reckoning with mankind that was intended to be represented here, then surely so much positive evidence on the one side would have been met with so much positive evidence on the other. Had it been meant that all men were to be divided into two classes, and acquitted or condemned according to their respective kindness or charitableness of disposition and conduct, with whatever accuracy the dividing line be carried throughout the entire mass of mankind, such infinite variety of shades of character and modes of conduct are there that those nearest to the line on one side would approach so closely to those nearest to it on the other, that it would be very difficult to make out the equity of an adjustment which would raise the one to heaven and consign the other to hell. It is however upon no such principle that the separation is represented here as being conducted. The great, the primary requirement, the presence or the absence of which fixes the position of each class on the right hand or upon the left of the Judge, is love to Christ, likeness unto him, as tested and exhibited in deeds of kindness done unto his poor afflicted suffering children. Apart from such love, such likeness to the Lord himself, you cannot have the special affection to his brethren. That special affection cannot subsist without running out into countless acts of compassion, of needful and

generous help. As to Christ himself, then, it is not our knowledge, nor our faith, that is to furnish the ground of our being numbered with those who are to stand on the right hand of the Judge. Infinite may be the variety, both in kind and in degree, of the acquaintance with the Saviour's character, the confidence in the Saviour's work. In the multitude that no man can number there be those who saw the day of Christ as afar off, who had but dim perceptions of the personal character and high office executed by the great Redeemer of mankind. In one thing they shall agree: in having hearts linked by the tie of a supreme affection to him, in having lives pictured over with those many acts of loving tenderness and tender mercy here so simply and so beautifully portrayed. As to our fellow-men, again, it is not our honesty, our justice, our generosity, our fidelity, our natural benevolence which is to place us on the right hand of the Judge. It is how we have felt, it is how we have acted towards the afflicted brethren of Jesus. A narrow contracted circle this may appear, yet one round which all the earthly virtues will be found to congregate, finding there the bond that binds them all together as the fruits of the Spirit, and wraps them all in harmonious and beautiful assemblage round the cross of the Crucified. He may be a kind man who is not honest, an honest man who is not meek, a meek man who is not pure; but, take him who feeds the hungry, who clothes the naked, who visits the sick, because of the spirit of Jesus implanted in his own soul, and because of the image of the Saviour seen on them he ministers to—this man's deeds of mercy will not be limited to that one circle; ready to show special kindness to those that are of the household of the faith, he will be ready to do good unto all men as God gives him the opportunity. Be not then over-careful, ye who are members of this household, to distinguish among the poor and the afflicted who are daily appealing to your benevolence, who do and who do not belong to Christ. If so, you may be putting it out of your power to join in the language put into the lips of the righteous, "Lord, when saw we thee a hungered?" Cultivate that large diffusiveness of pity and of help, that would, if it could, feed all the hungry, and give drink to all the thirsty, leave none who wanted unvisited and unrelieved. "Be not forgetful," said the apostle, "to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." Angel footsteps no longer tread on earth, angels come not now to our tent-doors. For angels clothed in human forms we may no longer, as the patriarchs did, spread the table and lay out the food. But a greater than angels walks among us, in suffering, in disguise. Christ himself is here—here in some hungry one to be fed,

some imprisoned one to be visited, some afflicted one to be comforted. Be not forgetful to let your sympathy and help range over the whole field of suffering humanity; here and there you may be succoring your Saviour unawares; you may be pleasing him who identifies himself with all his needy suffering children, and who will be ready at last to say, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."



## XV.

## THE WASHING OF THE DISCIPLES' FEET.\*

## THURSDAY.

JESUS sat down upon the Mount of Olives, over against the temple; and as the shadows of evening deepened in the valley of Kedron, and crept up its sides, he addressed to his wondering disciples the parables and prophecies preserved in the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters of St. Matthew's gospel. It was after he had finished all these sayings, either before he rose from his seat on the hillside, or on his way out afterwards to the village, that he said to his disciples, "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified." He had previously in his discourse been dealing with a broad and distant future, been sketching the world's history, describing its close—giving no dates, leaving much as to the sequence of events shadowy and undefined. Now he turns to a nearer future, to an event that was to happen to himself; and in terms free of all indistinctness and ambiguity he announces that the day after the next he would be betrayed, and afterwards crucified.

It may have been about the very time that Christ himself was speaking thus of his impending betrayal and crucifixion, that a secret session of the Sanhedrim was assembling, not in its usual hall of meeting, which formed part of the temple buildings, but in the house of Caiaphas, which tradition has located on the Hill of Evil Counsel, the height rising on the other side of the city from the Mount of Olives, across the valley of Hinnom. To this house of Caiaphas, wherever it was situated, the chief priests, and scribes, and elders of the people now resorted to hold their secret conclave. They met in a

\* Matt. 26 : 1-5, 14-19; Mark 14 : 1, 2, 11-17; Luke 22 : 1-30; John 13 : 1-20.



chafed and angry mood. For three consecutive days Jesus had been denouncing and defying them, in the most open manner, in the most public places. They had tried all their art to weaken his reputation, to put him wrong with the people or with their rulers, to extort from him some saying that might betray ignorance or involve blasphemy or treason. They had been more than defeated; their own weapons had been turned against themselves; the bitterest humiliation had been inflicted on them. There was but one remedy. They must meet this man in the temple courts no more. Never again must they allow themselves to be dragged into personal collision with him. There was but one seal for lips like his—the seal of death, and the sooner it were imposed the better. They had no difficulty in coming to the conclusion that he must die. But as old and practised politicians, who knew the people well, they hesitated as to the time and manner of taking and killing him. An open arrest at this particular time, when there were in and around Jerusalem such crowds of ignorant country-people, among them such numbers of those fiery-spirited Galileans, over whom Jesus had acquired so great an apparent mastery, would be perilous in the last degree. And so, curbing their wrath, they think it better to bide a while, and they said, “Not at the feast time, lest there be an uproar among the people.” Whatever pain the self-restraint may have cost them was more than overcome by the joy they felt when Judas came and said, “What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?” A hopeful sign this in their eyes: one of this man’s bosom friends turning against him, having some good ground, no doubt, they think, to hate him, as he evidently does. He can do for them the very thing they want: put it in their power to seize Jesus in one of his secret haunts, and come upon him “in the absence of the multitude.” And he is quite willing, obviously, to meet their wishes. Nor is he hard to bargain with. They offer him thirty silver shekels, the fixed price in the old law of the life of a servant, somewhere between three and four pounds of our money. He accepts the offer, and it is agreed between them that this sum shall be given him on his delivery of Jesus into their hands. Neither he nor they at first imagine that this will be done so speedily—even during the approaching feast.

A baser piece of treachery, a fouler compact, there has never been. Judas may not have been an utterly false man from the very beginning of his attachment to Christ’s person; it may not have been pure and simple selfishness and greed that tempted him to join the ranks of Christ’s disciples. Once, however, admitted, to

his own great surprise perhaps, among the twelve, and intrusted with the care of the small common fund which they possessed, the low base spirit that was in him led him into all kinds of selfish and covetous speculations and anticipations. As our Lord's career ran on, it became more and more apparent that little room for indulging these would be given. Disappointment grew into discontent. In the loving, pure, unearthly, unselfish, good and holy Jesus, there was nothing to attract, there was much to repel. The closer the contact the more that repellant power was felt. Already, towards the close of the second year of his attachment to Christ's person, he had said or done something to draw from the reticent lips of his Master the declaration, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" John 6:70. Still later, his Master's whole bearing, speech, and conduct, his retiring from the crowd, his courting solitude, the deep shades of sadness on his countenance, his beginning to tell his disciples privately but plainly, that he was about to be taken from them, that a shameful and cruel death was about to be inflicted on him, all this, little as Judas, in common with the rest, may have understood or realized the actual issue that was impending, ran utterly counter to all his plans and hopes. Upon disappointment, discontent, alienation, and disgust may have supervened, and in so ill a mood may Judas then have been, that the rebuke a few days before at Bethany, when he had interposed his remark about the box of precious ointment, had galled him to the uttermost, and whetted his spirit even to the keen edge of malice and revenge. That all this may have been so does not interfere with the belief that in the final stages of his treachery, other motives besides those of personal malice and pure greed may have entered into his heart and taken their share in prompting to the last black deed that has stamped his name with infamy.

It would not appear that in the compact as at first made between Judas and the Sanhedrim, there was any stipulation as to time. His offer would facilitate a secret and safe arrest of Jesus, but it may not have at once and entirely allayed their fears as to attempting this arrest during the feast. The conditions settled as to the thing to be done, and the bribe to be paid for the doing of it, they part, leaving it to Judas to find his own time and opportunity.

And now in the current of a narrative, which, ever since our Lord's arrival in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, has been getting quicker and more disturbed, there is a stop, a stillness. The troubled waters sink for a season out of sight, to rise again darker and more vexed than ever. On the Tuesday evening Jesus retired

to Bethany, and we see nothing, know nothing of him for the next day and a half. The intervening Wednesday would, no doubt, be given to quiet and repose. There are hollows in our own Arthur Seat not as far from Edinburgh as Bethany was from Jerusalem, in which one feels as far away from the noise and bustle of city life as if in the heart of the Highlands. Such was the hollow in which the favorite village lay, and there, in occupations unknown to us, this one peaceful day was spent, and there at night he had where to lay his head for his last sleep before his death—the night and day recruiting him in body and in spirit for Gethsemane and the cross.

On the Thursday afternoon he once more bent his steps towards the holy city. He was to celebrate that evening the passover with his disciples. Much in the way of preparation had to be done—the selection of a suitable apartment, the killing of the lamb, the providing of the bread, the wine, and the salad of bitter herbs. Nothing as yet had been arranged, and there was but little time to spare. The disciples come to him saying, “Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?” Our Lord does not send them all at random to do the best they could; he singles out Peter and John. Though often singularly and closely associated afterwards, this, I believe, was the only time that Christ separated them from all the rest, and gave them a conjunct task to perform. In sending them before the others, he could easily and at once have indicated where the room was in which they were to meet in the evening. Instead of this he gives them a sign, the following of which was to conduct them to it. This way of ordering it, whatever was its real purpose, served effectually to conceal from the others the locality of the guest-chamber, and may have been meant to keep the traitor in the meantime in ignorance of a fact, his earlier knowledge of which, communicated to the chief priests, might have precipitated the catastrophe, and cut off Gethsemane from our Saviour’s passion.

“Go into the city, and when you enter there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the good man of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?” Upon these passover occasions the inhabitants of the metropolis opened their houses freely to strangers coming up from the country; but was there no danger, if it were known that this accommodation was required for him whose life the authorities were seeking, that it might be denied? The singular message which Peter and John were to deliver would reveal the very thing which,

left to their own discretion, they might have wished to hide, for could two men in Galilean garb and with Galilean accent speak of the Master and his disciples, and it not be known of whom they spoke? Coming from such a quarter, carrying with it such a tone of authority, being, in fact, a command rather than a request, might not the good man of the house be offended and refuse? The instructions, however, are precise, and Peter and John follow them. All happens as Christ had indicated. They go into the city, they meet the man with the pitcher, they follow him, they deliver the message, and whether it was that the man himself was a disciple of Jesus, or that he was otherwise influenced, not only is there a ready and cordial compliance on his part, but, when Peter and John are shown into the apartment, they find it, as was not always the case, already furnished and prepared. It was a momentous meeting which on this last night of our Redeemer's life was to take place in this room, one never to be forgotten, to be had in memory by generation after generation, through all the after history of the church; and everything about it, even to the indicating of the place and the providing of the needful furniture, was matter of divine foresight and care.

The accounts of the different evangelists are so broken and confused that it is impossible to give anything like a regular connected narrative of what happened that night within the guest-chamber. At an early stage a strife broke out among the apostles as to which of them should be accounted the greatest. This may have happened after the passover celebration had commenced. The first thing done, when the company had assembled and sat down, was to pass round a cup of wine, the first of the four that were circulated in the course of the feast. If it was in doing so that they were uttered, then our Lord's first words after sitting down were these: "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not eat any more thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come." Luke 22:15-18. Never before had they sat down in such a formal manner with their Master at their head. The circumstance of taking their places around this board suggests to their narrow minds thoughts of the places and the dignities that, as they fancied, were afterwards to be theirs; and when, almost as soon as he had sat down, Jesus began to speak of the kingdom as if he was just about to enter on it, the strife as to which of them should be greatest in that kingdom arose.



But this strife has been attributed to another origin, one which links it in a manner so natural to the washing of the disciples' feet as to predispose us to adopt it. The master of the house had relinquished for the strangers the best apartment of his dwelling, and furnished it as well as he could. There was one duty of the host, however, that he failed to discharge. He did not personally receive the guests, nor preside at the washing of the feet, which always preceded the beginning of a feast. He and his family and his domestics were all themselves elsewhere engaged in the keeping of the passover. He saw that in the room the necessary apparatus for the washing, the basin and the water and the towel, were all provided, but he left it to the guests themselves to see that it was done. But which of the twelve will do it for the others? It is the office of the servant, the slave; which of them will acknowledge that he stands in any such relationship to the rest? Besides the settlement of their respective places around the table, here was another root of bitterness springing up to trouble them, raising the question of precedence among them.

— Spring up how it might, we have the fact that around the first communion table among the apostles, in the presence of their Master, in the critical and solemn position in which he and they stood, there was actually a quarrel about their individual rights and privileges; a petty ambition, the love of place and power, finding its way into the hearts of those most honored of the Lord, entering to defile the most sacred season and solemnity. There is some excuse for the twelve untaught Galilean fishermen, with all their vulgar conceptions at this time of what was coming when their Master's kingdom should be instituted. But what shall we say of those who have had the full light of the after revelations given, and who, in front of our Lord's most solemn declaration that his kingdom is not of this world, that the kind of authority and lordship that kings and princes assume and exercise should not have place within his church, under the garb of a glowing zeal, harbor as strong a love of place and power, as much vanity and pride, as much irritation of temper, as much severity and uncharitableness, as is ever to be seen in the world of common life? Alas for the strife of the first communion-table! Alas for the strifes and debates of almost every ecclesiastical body which since the days of Jesus Christ has been embodied in his name. You might have thought that in those churches where the distinctions were the fewest and of the least value, where there was least of that kind of food upon which the pride and vanity and ambition of our nature feed, there would have been proportionately less of their

presence and power. The fact, I think, rather lies the other way, for a reason not difficult to divine. —

None of the twelve would do the part of the minister or the servant to the others; and so, grumbling among themselves, they sit down with unwashed feet. Jesus rises from the table, lays aside his upper garment, pours water into the basin, takes the towel, girds himself with it, and begins himself to do what none of them would undertake. One of the first before whose feet the Saviour stooped may have been Judas. We shall see presently that he has thrust himself into a seat very near to, if not the next to that of Christ. He allows his feet to be washed, not without a certain strange feeling in heart, but without word spoken or remonstrance made. But when Jesus approaches Peter, the impetuous apostle cannot remain silent. "Lord," he says, lost in wonder, full of reverence, profoundly sensible of the great gulf that separated himself and all the rest from Jesus—"Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" He gets the calm reply, "What I do thou knowest not now;"—"thou hast not yet discerned—though it needed no quick eye to see it—the purpose of my act; but thou shalt know hereafter, shalt know presently." But the impatient apostle will not submit and wait. Strong in his sense of the unseemliness, the unsuitableness of the act, fancying that the very love and reverence he bore to Jesus forbade him to permit it, he declares, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me," is Christ's reply—a single slender beam of light upon the darkness, enough to point to some higher spiritual meaning of the act, not enough to reveal the whole significance of the transaction to Peter's mind, but quite enough to turn at once into quite an opposite channel the current of his feelings. "No part with thee if thou wash me not! then, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." Taking up once more his act in its symbolic character, as representative of the spiritual washing by regeneration, Jesus saith to him, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." For even as he who in the ordinary roadway cleanses himself from outward defilement is clean every whit, and needs no after washing save that of the feet—for go where he may upon the dusty roads, every hour, and at all times, the feet are being soiled, and need renewed, repeated washings—so is it true of him who hath gone down into the great laver, and washed all sins away in the blood of the atonement, that he is clean every whit, has all his sins forgiven, all the guilt of them removed, and needs no after washing, saving that which consisteth in the removal of the daily stains that are ever afresh, by our converse

with this world, being contracted. "And ye are clean," added Jesus, "but not all." The words, but faintly understood, yet so calmly and authoritatively uttered, effect their immediate object. Peter silently submits; the work goes on; the circle is completed. The feet of all are washed, no one after Peter venturing to resist or remonstrate.

The feet-washing in the guest-chamber by our Lord himself we are inclined to regard as the greatest instance of his humiliation as a man in the common intercourse of life, in the discharge of its ordinary duties. He was at pains himself to guard it against misinterpretation: "So, after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am." It was his being so infinitely their superior that lent its grace and full significance to the act. And this superiority, so far from cloaking, or with false humility pretending to disown, he asserts. This is what makes the whole ministry of our Lord on earth so utterly unlike that of any other man who has ever trodden it. No one ever made pretensions so high; no one ever executed offices more humble. No one ever claimed to stand so far above the ordinary level of our humanity; speaking of himself as the light of the world, having rest and peace and life for all at his disposal, to dispense as truly loyal gifts to all who owned him as their spiritual King. No one ever made himself more thoroughly one with every human being whom he met, or was so ready with all the services that in his need one man may claim from his brother.

"If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done unto you." With that greatest of all examples before us, what act, what office of human kindness naturally laid upon us should we ever count too low, too mean—should we shrink from, because of any idea that it would be a humiliating of ourselves before our fellow-men to undertake it? It is indeed an utter mistaking of this example to suppose that it calls us to a repetition of the very act of Christ. Only if there be feet needing to be washed, which the custom of the time and country requires to be washed, while there is no one else upon whom the duty properly devolves, only then does the example of Jesus call to a literal imitation of what he did. His own act stands before us, not as a model act to be exactly copied, but as an act representative to us of the whole circle of kindly offices that we are called upon to render to one another, and as illustrative of the humble, self-denying spirit

in which all these offices should be discharged. You are all aware that, on each returning Maundy-Thursday, the day before Easter, the pope washes the feet of twelve poor men. A better comment has never been made upon the act than the one made long ago by Bengel. "In our day," he says, "popes and princes imitate the feet-washing to the letter, but a greater subject for admiration would be, for instance, a pope in unaffected humility washing the feet of one king, (his own equal in rank, and so the exact analogue to the disciples' mutual washing of each other as brethren,) than the feet of twelve paupers." So true were the Saviour's words that went to indicate the difficulty which lay in a faithful following of the example that he had just been setting: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." So easy is it to violate the spirit by sticking to the letter of a precept; so easy for pride to take the form of humility.

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## XVI.

### THE EXPOSURE OF JUDAS.\*

#### THURSDAY.

THE four evangelists agree in stating that it was upon a Sunday, the day after the Jewish Sabbath, that our Lord rose from the grave, and that it was on the day preceding this Sabbath that he was crucified. They all assign the same events to the same days of the week: the last supper to Thursday evening, the crucifixion to Friday, the lying in the tomb to Saturday, the resurrection to Sunday. But there is a marked discrepancy in the accounts of the three earlier evangelists as compared with that of St. John, as to the relation of these days of the week to the Jewish days of the month and of the feast. If we had only the narratives of St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke before us, we must at once have concluded that our Lord partook of the passover supper at the same time with the Jews. On the other hand, if we had only the narrative of St. John before us, we should as naturally have concluded that it was upon the evening after the crucifixion, that the paschal supper was observed generally by the Jews, and that Jesus must have antedated his observance of it, partaking of it a day before the usual one, on the evening of the thirteenth day of the month Nisan. The removal of this discrepancy is one of the most difficult problems with which harmonists of the

\* Matt. 26:21-25; Mark 14:18-21; Luke 22:21-23; John 13:21-35.



gospels have had to deal, nor is there any single question touching the chronology of our Saviour's life upon which more labor and learning have been bestowed. The success has not been equal to the pains bestowed. The matter still remains in doubt. No doubt whatever exists as to the fact that, whether he anticipated the ordinary time or not, it was that he might observe the Jewish passover with his disciples, that our Lord, on the night of his betrayal, sat down with his twelve apostles in the guest-chamber at Jerusalem.

In the paschal supper, as then observed, (and we cannot well imagine that our Lord would deviate to any great degree from the customary manner of its observance,) four, and on some occasions five cups of wine were circulated among the guests, marking different stages of the feast. When the company, which ordinarily was not less than ten, nor more than twenty,\* had assembled and ranged themselves round the tables, the first cup of wine was filled, and the head of the family (for we are to look upon this ordinance as essentially a family gathering) pronounced a blessing on the feast and on the cup, using the expression, "Praise be to thee, O Lord our God, the King of the world, who hast created the fruit of the vine." After the blessing, the cup was passed round, and the hands were washed. The bitter herbs, dipped in vinegar, were then placed upon the table, and a portion of them eaten in remembrance of the sorrows of the Egyptian bondage. After this the other paschal dishes were brought in: the charoseth or sop, a liquid compounded of various fruits and mingled with wine or vinegar, into which pieces of bread were dipped; the cake of unleavened bread; and finally the roasted lamb, placed before the head of the company. Then followed the questions and explanations put and given in accordance with the instructions of Moses: "And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses." *Exod. 12:26, 27.* They sang then together the first part of the Hallel or song of praise, embracing the one hundred and thirteenth and one hundred and fourteenth psalms, and the second cup of wine was drunk. Then began the feast proper: the householder, taking two small loaves, breaking one of them in two, laying the pieces upon the whole loaf, wrapping the whole in bitter herbs, dipping it in the sop, and eating it, with the words, "This is the bread of affliction which our fathers ate in Egypt." Next came

\* It might be one hundred, if each could have a piece of the lamb as large as an olive.

the blessing upon each kind of food as it was partaken of, the paschal lamb being eaten last, and the third cup, called the cup of blessing, was drunk. The remainder of the Hallel, the psalms from the one hundred and fifteenth to the one hundred and eighteenth, were sung or chanted, with which the celebration ordinarily concluded. Occasionally a fifth cup was added, and what was called the Great Hallel (Psa. 120-137) was repeated.

It was after the strife and the feet-washing, and coincident with the circulation of the first of these passover cups, that our Lord used the words recorded in the fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth verses of the twenty-second chapter of St. Luke: "And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." Clear before the Saviour's eye were all the scenes of the impending midnight hour in the garden, the next forenoon in the judgment-hall, the afternoon upon the cross. He stood touching the very edge of these great sufferings. The baptism that he had to be baptized with was now at hand—and how was he straitened till it was accomplished!—a few quiet hours lay between him and his entrance into the cloud. With a desire more earnest and vehement than on any other occasion, he wished to spend those hours with his apostles, to take his last leave of them, to give his farewell instructions to them. He had never before partaken of the passover with them. He desired to do it this once. He knew that it could never be repeated. He knew that this was virtually the last Jewish passover: that with the offering up of himself in the great sacrifice of the following day that long line of passover celebrations that had run now through fifteen hundred years, down from the night in Egypt when the first-born were slain, was to be brought to its close. — He knew that all which this rite prefigured was then to be fulfilled, and that that fulfilment was to issue in the erection of a spiritual kingdom, in which other kind of tables were to be spread, and other kind of wine to be drunk. "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God shall come." Emphatic here is the double repetition of the words, "for I say unto you"—calling special attention to the words that followed. Responding to this call, we fix our thoughts upon these words; but beyond the intimation they contain of that being our Lord's last passover, and of his speedy entering into an estate altogether higher, yet in some respects alike, they remain

almost as mysterious to us as they must have been to those who heard them for the first time at the supper-table.

In washing the disciples' feet, Jesus had said, "Ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean." John 13:10, 11. So early, from the very first, did the thought of Judas and his meditated deed press upon the Saviour's spirit. When the washing of the feet was over, and Jesus sat down, and the repast began, they all noticed that there was a cloud upon their Master's countenance, and the disciple who, sitting next to him, could best read the expression of his face, saw that he "was troubled in spirit." What was vexing him? what was marring the joy of such a meeting? They are not left long in doubt as to the cause. Christ breaks the silence into which, in the sadness of his spirit, he had fallen; he speaks in tone and manner quite different from those of his ordinary colloquial address. And he "testified and said, Verily, verily I say unto you, that one of you which eateth with me shall betray me!" Betray him! how? for what? to what? Betray such a Master at such a time! Bad enough for any common disciple to use the means and opportunities that acquaintance gave to effect his ruin; but for one of them, his own familiar friends, whom he has drawn so closely round his person, upon whom he has lavished such affection—for one of those admitted to this most sacred of meals, the holiest seal of the nearest earthly bond; for one of the twelve to betray him! No wonder, as the thought of all the guilt which such an act involved sprung up within their breasts, that they should be, as they were, "exceeding sorrowful;" that they should look "one on another, doubting of whom he spake"—fixing searching looks on all around, to see whether any countenance showed the confusion of felt guilt, that, after inquiring among themselves which of them it was that "should do this thing," they should begin, "every one of them, to say unto him, one by one, Is it I? and another, Is it I?" You like the men that met such an announcement in such a way. You like them for the burning sense of shame they show at the very thought of there being one among them capable of such a deed. You like them for the strong desire that each man shows to clear himself from the charge. You like them for the prompt appeal that each man makes to Jesus. Above all, you like them that there is none so bold and over-confident, not even Peter, as at once to think and say of himself that there was no possibility it could be he, but that all, not without some secret wonder and self-distrust, put in turn the question, "Lord, is it I?" All but one! He did not at first dare to put this question to his Master. In the confusion, his having omit-

ted to do so, would not be noticed. He had returned look for look, as they at first scanned each other; no face calmer or less confused; no one suspecting Judas.

To the many questions coming so eagerly from all sides and ends of the table, Jesus made the general reply: "He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me." Had there been but one vessel containing the paschal sauce into which all dipped, this would have been nothing more than a repetition of the first announcement that it was one of them now eating with him at the same table that should betray him. But if, as we have every reason to believe, there were more dishes than one upon the table, this second saying of our Lord would limit the betrayal to that smaller circle of which he was himself the centre—the three or four all of whom dipped into the same vessel. Within that circle was Judas, who, when he heard the terrible words that followed, "The Son of man goeth as it is written of him, but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born," whether from the circle having been drawn so much the narrower taking him in among the few, one of whom must be the man, or from the look of his Master being fixed on him, the spell of which he could not resist, or from the very burden and terror of a denunciation which sent a thrill through every heart, could no longer remain silent, but said to Jesus, as the others had done before, "Master, is it I?" Jesus said unto him, "Thou hast said;" that is, "Yes, thou art the man."

We have the express testimony of the fourth evangelist that no man at the table but himself knew for what purpose Judas at last went out, that none of them at this time suspected him as the betrayer. No man at the table then could have heard that answer of our Lord; a thing that we can scarcely imagine how it could be, but by supposing that Judas lay upon the seat immediately next to Jesus on the one side, as John lay upon the one nearest to him on the other. Assuming this, Jesus might easily have spoken to one so near in such an undertone that none could overhear.

Let us imagine now, that close to Judas, on the same side, or one or two off from John, upon the other side, Peter was sitting, and the last incident in the strange story becomes intelligible. None have heard our Saviour's specific designation of the traitor to himself. The terrible malediction, however, pronounced upon him has whetted their curiosity to know who he is. Peter sees that John is the most likely one to find it out. If the Master will tell it to any one, it will be to him, he couching so close to Jesus that he has only to throw



back his head for it to rest upon his Master's bosom. Into his ear, therefore, any secret may be easily and safely whispered. As Peter is so placed that he cannot well do it otherwise without his object revealing itself, by signs rather than by words he tells John to ask. John does so, and gets an answer that was specific and unambiguous; one, however, that no one at table but himself could have had any knowledge of. "He it is," said Jesus, "to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it." And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. Two men of the twelve now knew to whom the Lord referred—Judas, on the one side, to whom Jesus had directly said, "Thou art the man," and John, now, on the other, to whom the sign was as explicit as any words could be—a sign, however, only to John himself, the others not having heard the words that gave the act its meaning. The giving of the sop to him decided the course of the betrayer. "That thou doest," said Jesus to him, "do quickly." He arose and went out immediately; and it was night. And into that night he went carrying a blacker night within his own dark breast. And now, how are we to interpret this striking passage in the history of our Lord?

1. This exposure and denunciation of the traitor may have been one of the needful steps in the accomplishment of the divine designs. Judas had already made a compact with the chief priests to deliver Jesus into their hands. But of the time and manner of that deliverance nothing had been said. As to these, nothing had been resolved on. We may well believe that Judas entered the guest-chamber without any premeditated purpose of executing his design that night. The discovery, however, that his Master already knew all that he had done, all that he meant to do, the judgment passed, the terrible woe denounced on him, instead of checking him in his career, served but to spur him on, and form within him, and fix the purpose to go and do that very night the thing he had engaged to do. Operating in this way, what was said and done by Jesus may have contributed to the accomplishment within the appointed time of the predetermined counsel and purpose of the Most High.

2. We have Christ's own authority for saying that one of his reasons for acting as he did towards Judas was to afford to the other apostles an evidence of his Messiahship. "I speak not of you all," he had said; "I know whom I have chosen: but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he." Had nothing been said beforehand by Jesus, had everything run the course it did,

their Master remaining apparently in profound ignorance of how his arrest in the garden was to be brought about, then to the apostles' eyes this mystery would have hung around the whole procedure: that Jesus had been deceived, had suffered a traitor to enter unknown and undetected into the innermost circle of his friends, had fallen by an unexpected blow from the hand of one fancied to be friendly. As it was, what a proof had the apostle set before their eyes, that Jesus knew what was in man, and needed not that any one should tell him what was in man. None of them had distrusted Judas. He could have given no patent proof of his falseheartedness. He had kept up the appearance of true friendship to the last, so as to deceive every other eye. Yet when all is over, and they recall what their Master had said a year before his death, that one of them was a devil, and remember especially the sayings of the guest-chamber, how vividly would the conviction come home to the minds of the apostles, that they had to do with one from whom no secrets were hidden, before whose all-seeing eye every heart lay naked and bare!

3. Let us see here an exhibition of the humanity of Jesus, his being truly one of us, with all the common sensibility of our nature, moral and emotional. There is nothing that the human heart so shrinks from and shudders at as treachery in a friend; the wearing of a mask, the acceptance of all the tokens and pledges of affection, the profession of admiration, attachment, love, yet deep within coldness, sullenness, selfishness, a waiting for and seeking for opportunity to make gain of the cultivated friendship, and a readiness, when the time comes, to sacrifice the friend on the altar of pride, or covetousness, or ambition. And if Jesus resented the hypocrisy and treachery of Judas, if his spirit recoiled from near contact with the traitor, if when these last hours had come which he wished to spend alone with those he had loved so well and was loving now, if that could be, better than ever the nearer the hour of his departure came—he felt as if that guest-chamber were defiled by such a presence as that of Judas, and felt burdened and restrained till he was gone, what is this but saying that there beat in him the same heart that beats in all of us, when that heart is right within? One object of the Saviour in so soon introducing the topic of his betrayal may have been to get rid of a presence felt to be incongruous, felt to be a restraint. He had much to say that was for the ear of friendship alone. He had to open up his heart in a way that no one would seek to do before the cold and the unsympathizing, much less before the alienated and the hostile. It may have been with the feeling that the sooner he was gone the better, that Jesus said to Judas,

"What thou doest, do quickly." One thing at least is evident, that it was with a burst of elation and joy, as one escaping from under a dull and heavy pressure that crushed the spirit into sadness, that Jesus spoke to the others instantly on Judas being gone. "Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him. Little children, yet a little while I am with you," and so on throughout all the remainder of the feast he speaks and acts with a free unburdened heart.

4. There is more than the humanity here; there is the divinity of our Lord. He assumes and exercises the office of the Judge. He is a God to Judas. He takes this man into his hands, and deals with him as none but God had a right to do. I speak not of that knowledge which laid bare to him all that he had in his heart to do, but of his dooming him as he did; his pronouncing over him the most terrible sentence that was ever pronounced over a human being on this side eternity: "Woe to that man; it had been good for that man if he had not been born!" That there was tenderness and pity, infinite pity and infinite tenderness in the heart of Jesus for Judas, who can doubt? That in dealing with him as he did in the guest-chamber, he was giving him another and last opportunity of repentance I do most thoroughly believe. What way could you take more fitted to turn any man from a crime that you knew he meditated, than the telling him beforehand that you knew all that he intended and had planned to do, and by denouncing the crime contemplated in the strongest terms you could employ? That a purpose of mercy lay embedded in our Lord's treatment of Judas is not disproved by the fact, that instead of working anything like repentance, it stirred up the malicious feelings to an intenser activity. That fact, like the thousand others of like kind that are daily, hourly happening in God's moral government of our race, only shows that the very goodness and grace of the Most High, the wisdom, purity, and holiness of his law, are too often turned by the perverse spirit that is in us into incitements to a bolder and more determined resistance to his authority. The case of Judas, in this stage of it, is but another instance of what is a very common experience, that if a man have once fairly committed himself to a certain course, have resolved to brave all its perils in order to realize its fancied gains, be becomes so self-blinded, so impetuous, so impatient of all check or hinderance, that anything whatever thrown in his way, however fitted in itself to warn and check, becomes but as a goad in the side

of a fiery steed, driving him the more fiercely on his career. But is it over one whom mercy and love have followed to the farthest limits, and have been obliged at last to let go, that the fearful sentence is pronounced: "Woe to that man; it had been better for him that he had not been born!" Does he who says that know it to be true? He can know it only by his being one with God. Has he who pronounces this doom a title to do so? He can have it only by challenging to himself the prerogatives of the supreme Judge of all mankind.

5. Let us look on with wonder and awe as there is opened here to our view in one of its depths, the great mystery of this world and of God's wise and holy government of it. "It had been better for that man that he had not been"—but why then was he born? A great crime is made to minister to the greatest act and instance of the divine love, yet the criminal is stripped of no part of his guilt. "The Son of man goeth as it is written;" that writing is but the expression of the divine will; that will is sovereign, just, and good; yet woe to the man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! human freedom, human agency, human guilt taken up into that vast and complicated machinery by which the counsels of the Most High God are carried out. "Oh the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" "Thou wilt say unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

After Judas left the room, our Lord said, "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so say I now to you." The words struck upon Peter's ear, and set his quick spirit working. Another intimation this of some mysterious movement about to be made.—Keeping the words before him, so soon as a convenient pause occurred, Peter said unto Jesus, "Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards." The answer should have satisfied him—should have repressed at least the curiosity which it was obviously not Christ's purpose to satisfy. But the pertinacious apostle will not accept the mild rebuke that it contains; he will still go on, be still more urgent. He had already got one cheek at the feet-washing, from which it cost him little to recover. He may have



been somewhat tremulous when with the rest he put the question to Jesus, "Lord, is it I?" But he has recovered himself, and is ready now to say almost anything to his Master, almost anything of himself. "Lord," he replies, "why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake." Let us do Peter the justice to believe that this was not altogether a vain and empty boast; let us believe that if his Master's life had been threatened by open violence he would have stood by him to the last, and perilled or lost his own life in his defence. He was one of the two who, strangely enough, perhaps suspecting something from the temper of the rulers, had brought a sword with him into the guest-chamber. And he proved in the garden that he was ready to meet the risks that the use of that weapon brought with it. It was in another kind of courage than the physical one that he was to prove himself so bankrupt. Still there was no small measure of presumption in his being so free with the expression of his readiness to lay down his life, a presumption which Jesus met by saying first, with gentle irony, "Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake?" and then adding, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow" (the time of the cock-crowing, a division of the Jewish night, shall not pass), "till thou hast denied me thrice."

The feast goes on. Some unrecorded observation has been made by Peter in the name of the others as well as of himself, when our Lord turns to him and says, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you;" to have you all, (the word here used took in the others as well as Peter,) "that he might sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren"—another and most impressive warning which should have sent his thoughts into another channel, but he is back again to his first position. Jesus had said nothing open of any peril to himself, but the apostle cannot get it out of his thoughts. "Lord," he says, "I am ready to go with thee to prison and to death." He gets in answer the same distinct prediction, that before the dawn he should thrice deny his Lord.

The feast is over. They are on the way out to Gethsemane, when Jesus says to the group around him, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered." There was nothing to call for Peter's intervention here. But he cannot be silent; he must step forward and put himself above all the others. "Though all shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." Once more, for the third time, the prediction of his three denials is

rung in his ears, but with no effect. "But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee. Likewise also said they all." Yet within an hour they all had fled, and within three hours the three denials had taken place. How are we to look upon so singular a display of such sustained, reiterated, most obstinate, and boastful self-confidence? Something we must attribute to the excitement of the occasion, but more to the natural temper of the man. The last few days had been swelling the tide of Pharisaic indignation as it rose around Jesus in the temple, till its proudest, darkest waves seemed ready to burst upon and swallow him up. New and strange impressions of some great impending calamity, which all their Master's words and actions deepened, seized upon the apostles. There were some quiet hours for him and them in the guest-chamber; but calm as he was, there was a mournfulness in their Master's calmness, as if he sat under the shadow of some terrible catastrophe, and such a constant throwing out of hints as to its approach, that one can well believe that the spirits of the apostles were wrought up to a high pitch of excitement, so that whatever each man had in him of weakness or of strength, was just in the condition to come out in all its fulness; and so in all its fulness came out that rash, presumptuous, overtrustfulness in self, in which lay Peter's peculiar weakness.

But something, too, we must attribute to another agency, which took advantage of all the excitement of the occasion, and wrought upon the temper of the man. I have already spoken of the evidence which, within the walls of this supper-chamber, Jesus gave of his eye being one that could see into the future of earthly events. But now the proof meets us of that eye being one that pierces beyond the bounds of the outward and earthly, scans the secrets of the world of spirits, and sees all that is there going on. It is but a glimpse he gives us of what he knew and saw; but how strange, how awful, how full of warning, how full of encouragement, that glimpse! Looking at the scene in the supper-chamber with the eye of sense, you see twelve men with their Master at their head, in trying, startling circumstances; first one and then another acting out their natural dispositions and characters. Looking with the eye of faith as Jesus lifts the veil, you see Satan tempting, Jesus praying, the Father hearing, the sifting suffered, the son of perdition lost, the boastful disciple tried, his fall permitted, the invisible shield held over him—his faith not suffered wholly to fail, his very fall turned to good account, and he by it made all the sifter to be a comforter and strengthener of others.

Such was the first communion-table: around it the play of these spiritual agencies; by the men who sat at it the exhibitions of such weakness, presumption, guilt—one betraying, one denying, all forsaking. With such a spectacle before our eyes let us not be high-minded, but fear. We come to our tables of communion with the same weak nature that was in Judas, and Peter, and the rest; and Satan may be ready to enter into our heart and may be desirous to have us that he may sift us as wheat. The nearer we stand to Jesus, the greater his efforts to throw the snare around our feet by which our fall may be effected. Let the self-ignorance and want of faith and failure in attachment that all the twelve showed that night shine as a beacon before our eyes, and under a trembling sense of our own weakness and liability to forsake or deny, or even to betray our Master, let us cast ourselves upon him, that for us, too, he may pray the Father, that in the coming hours of trial our faith fail not, but that through all of temptation and danger that yet awaits us in this world we may be safely borne, through the might of his strengthening presence, and to the praise of his great name.

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## XVII.

### THE LORD'S SUPPER.\*

#### THURSDAY.

LET us imagine that one previously ignorant of the history of our religion were to set himself, in the first instance, to investigate the origin of the institution of the Lord's Supper. The fact that the entire Christian church, however its various sections may otherwise differ, all agree in observing this rite, is before his eyes, and he finds upon inquiry that it has done so for many generations past. Guided simply by the lights of common history, he ascertains that as far back as till about one hundred and thirty years after the time when Christ is said to have lived, there was a society calling itself by his name, in which this ordinance was kept. There is then put into his hand a copy of the New Testament, in which an account of its first institution is given. He finds in this book, however, so much that is extraordinary, that he is disposed at first to be incredulous—incredulous, among other things, as to this account. Might not this rite have taken its rise somewhat differently, at some after

\* Matt. 26 : 26-29 ; Mark 14 : 22-25 ; Luke 22 : 19, 20 ; 1 Cor. 11 : 23-25.

period, the narrative contrived and adapted by those who wished to bestow upon it as interesting a birth as possible? A slight reflection resolves this difficulty. How could the men of any after period, say fifty or a hundred years after the death of Christ, begin then for the first time to keep a rite which bore upon the very front of it that it was kept in obedience to a command of the Saviour given on the night before he died? Had this command not been given at that time, and had the observance not at that time commenced, one cannot see how, without a falsehood in their hands which they could not but detect, any body of men could at any posterior period have commenced the celebration. Besides, it is expressly asserted in the Acts of the Apostles that the first disciples of Jesus did actually begin the breaking of bread in remembrance of their Master a few days after the resurrection, and continued it weekly thereafter. How could a record containing such a statement have been at any subsequent time foisted upon the faith of those who had never before seen or heard of such an ordinance? It would have been utterly impossible to have gained credit for a narrative containing such a statement, had the statement not in point of fact been true.

Simply and by itself, therefore, the continuous observance of this sacred ordinance carries with it a separate and independent proof that it must have commenced at the time specified in the gospel narrative. Assuming, then, that narrative as authentic, as being a trustworthy account of what was said and done by Jesus Christ within the chamber where he assembled with the twelve, what might such an inquirer as we have imagined gather from that narrative alone, and without going beyond its limits, as to the character of Christ?

1. Would he not be struck with the manifold evidence given within the compass of these few hours of the prescience of Jesus, his minute foreknowledge of the future?—All throughout he speaks and acts as one who knew that this was to be his parting interview with the men around him, his last meeting with them before his death. He knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of this world unto the Father. He spoke of that departure as at hand. Externally there was nothing to indicate that his death was so near, that his body was so soon to be broken, his blood to be shed. Such private information might have been conveyed to him as to the plans and purposes of the rulers, and of the compact of the betrayer with them, as to satisfy him that the earliest opportunity would be taken to cut him off. A presentiment that his end was near might thus have been created, but such a presentiment could not have



exhibited the clearness and the certainty of that conviction upon which he acted. Besides, it was not his own future alone which was mapped out so distinctly before his eye. It was the future, near and remote, of every man around him. He tells Judas beforehand that he was to betray him, Peter that he was to deny him, the whole of them that they were that night to be offended at him and forsake him, that he was to be left alone. Looking still farther on, he dimly intimates to Peter that in his death he was to resemble his Master, and distinctly tells the rest that for a little while they should be sorrowful, but that their sorrow should be turned into joy; that the time was coming when they should be put out of the synagogues, and that whosoever killed them should think that he did God service. Three times in the course of his addresses, while pre-announcing one or another of these events, he emphatically declares that he told them these things beforehand, that when all came to pass they might remember that he had told them, and believe that he was the Messiah promised to their fathers. Pondering over the form and manner of the evidence thus afforded of Christ's prescience, might not our inquirer say, Surely a greater than any of the old prophets is here! Their knowledge of the future was derived from another, was communicated as so derived. It was as the Lord revealed that they declared and described. To their eye there was so much light upon the future as God was pleased to throw upon it, but all around was darkness. They never assumed, and they never exercised, a power of foreknowing and foretelling in their own name, and without any limits. But here is one upon whom the power sits easily, as a natural inherent gift, who exercises it without token of its being in any way limited, without any recognition of his indebtedness to another for the foresight he displays.

2. Opening his mind and heart to the first impressions of the scene, our inquirer could not fail to be greatly struck with the strong considerate affection shown by Jesus to his disciples. There hangs around the incidents and sayings of the upper chamber the touching and tender interest which attaches to the last words and acts of the dying. When a man knows that he is speaking to his family or friends around him for the last time, that it is his last opportunity of addressing to them words of counsel and encouragement, what a solemnity attaches to the interview! And if he be a man of ardent affections, what love and sympathy will breathe out in his parting words! The world of common life is not void of instances in which men so placed have risen to a heroic height of self-forgetfulness, and have spent their last moments in the effort to comfort and strengthen

those they left behind. There is much, however, to distinguish this instance of a parting farewell from all others of a like kind. It is given to no man to foresee his impending sufferings, and the exact manner of his death, as Jesus foresaw them; nor is it given to any to foresee, as he did, all the after trials of those from whom he was to part. He knows, as he is speaking to the twelve in the guest-chamber, that within an hour or two he shall be lying in the great agony of the garden; that he shall never close his eyes again till he closes them in death; that to-morrow there await him all the mockeries of the judgment-hall, all the shame and suffering of the cross; that the shades of the next day shall darken round his sepulchre. But the prospect of all this, though so near, so vividly seen, so awfully dark, has not power to withdraw his thoughts from his disciples, or keep him from bestowing upon them those last hours given for earthly intercourse. As he speaks to them his whole heart seems absorbed with the one desire, to soothe, to comfort, to warn, to fortify, to encourage. If he speak of his own departure, it is as if the thing about it that grieved him most was, that they should be left exposed to so many difficulties and trials when he was gone. Their very ignorance of what was awaiting them quickens his compassion and gives deeper pathos to his words. As he looks round upon the little flock so soon to be scattered as sheep without a shepherd, the coming history of each rises before his eye. There is James, who so soon is to seal his testimony with his blood; Peter, who, like his Lord, is to be crucified; John, who is to be left survivor of them all. How little do these men know the kind of life that is before them! How shall he best prepare them for it? The very frailties and faults that he knew they were to exhibit seem but to have added to the gentleness and tenderness of his love. How else shall we account for the manner in which he speaks of them and to them upon this occasion? Of them, to his Father: "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me, and they have kept thy word; they have known surely that I came out from thee, they have believed that thou didst send me." To themselves: "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me." To speak in such a way as this of men who at the time knew so little of the real character of their Master, and had so little faith; to speak thus of the very men who, instead of continuing with him, were all that very night to forsake him, what shall we say of it but that there was the very rarest exhibition here of that charity which believeth all things, thinketh no evil, hopeth all things; which, wherever faith, though it be but as a

grain of mustard-seed, is genuine; wherever devotion, though it be weak, is true—is ready to acknowledge and approve?

3. After being struck generally with the singular manifestations of a deep-rooted self-forgetting attachment to the twelve shown by Jesus all through this interview, we may imagine the attention of our supposed inquirer to be concentrated upon that act by which he instituted an observance to be kept for ever after in remembrance of him. As the author of a great religious revolution, the head of a great religious society, it is remarkable that this is the one religious ceremony instituted and observed by our Lord himself. After his death and resurrection, he issued the command that, on being enrolled as his followers, all were to be baptized; but this meeting together, this breaking of bread and drinking of wine in remembrance of him, was the single ordinance that in his lifetime he set up, and by his own first observance hallowed. Is there anything peculiar in his having done so? There is nothing peculiar certainly in the cherishing and expressing a desire to be remembered when we are gone by those we loved; nothing peculiar in our leaving behind some remembrancers by which our memory may be kept green and fresh within their hearts. But there is something more here than the expression of such a desire, the bequeathing of such a remembrancer. There is the appointment of a particular mode by which for ever afterwards the remembrance of Christ, and more particularly of his death for them, was to be sustained in the breasts of all his followers. It is common enough in human history to meet with periodical celebrations, anniversaries of the day of their birth, or of their death, held in honor of those who have greatly distinguished themselves by their virtues, their genius, their high services to their country or to mankind. But where except here have we read of any one in his own lifetime originating and appointing the method by which he was to be remembered, himself presiding at the first celebration of the rite, and laying as his injunction upon all his followers, regularly to meet for its observance? Who among all those who have been the greatest ornaments of our race, the greatest benefactors of humanity, would ever have risked his reputation, his prospect of being remembered by the ages that were to come, by exhibiting such an eager and premature desire to preserve and perpetuate the remembrance of his name, his character, his deeds? They have left it to others after them to devise the means for doing so; neither vain enough, nor bold enough, nor foolish enough to be themselves the framers of these means. Who then is he who ventures to do what none else ever did? Who is this who, ere he dies, by his own act and deed

sets up the memorial institution by which his death is to be shown forth? Surely he must be one who knows and feels that he has claims to be remembered such as none other ever had—claims of such a kind that, in pressing them in such a way upon the notice of his followers, he has no fear whatever of what he does being attributed to any other, any lesser motive than the purest, deepest, most unselfish love? Does not Jesus Christ in the very act of instituting in his own lifetime this memorial rite, step at once above the level of ordinary humanity, and assert for himself a position toward mankind utterly and absolutely unique?

And if, by the mere fact of Jesus Christ having erected with his own hand the institute by which his name and memory were to be kept alive, the impression might thus, and naturally enough, have been conveyed into the mind of our supposed inquirer, of there being something superhuman about him, would not this impression be sustained and enhanced as he ran his eye over the words which, on this occasion, Christ was represented as having addressed to his disciples? Something surely quite original, belonging to himself alone, was the way in which he spoke of his relationship to his own disciples, to all mankind, to the Divine Being whom he called his Father. To his own disciples you hear him saying, "I am the vine, ye are the branches." "Abide in me and I in you." "Without me ye can do nothing." "Because I live, ye shall live also." "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." As to all men you hear him saying, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." And as to God, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." "And this is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." "All mine are thine, and thine are mine." "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." Out of those few hours which Jesus spent with the twelve within the walls of the guest-chamber at Jerusalem, from what he did there, and what he said, how much would there be to awaken in the spirit of such an inquirer as we have imagined, the most intense curiosity as to the real character of him who appears as president in this pass-over celebration; how much to carry the conviction home either that he was a vain presumptuous egotist, taking a place among his fellows



and before God to which he had no right, or he was other than an ordinary child of Adam, one who stood in quite a different position both to God and to man from that which any one before, or any one since in the history of our race has occupied.

With these remarks upon the general impressions which a first reading of the narrative of all that happened in the guest-chamber might be supposed to make on the mind of an intelligent and candid reader, let us look with our own eyes at the different accounts which have been transmitted to us of the institution of the Lord's Supper. They are four in number. The one first written and published was that of St. Paul, remarkable not only as coming from one who was not an eye-witness, but who received it by immediate revelation from our Lord himself. Springing from such a peculiar and independent source, its concurrence with those of the three evangelists is striking and satisfactory; for all the four accounts do thoroughly and substantially agree. There are indeed many verbal differences between them. No two of the narrators put exactly the same words in Christ's lips. We might have expected that if any words of our Lord were to be reported with exact and literal fidelity, they would have been those uttered by him on this occasion. That it is not so is one of the many proofs that it was the general meaning and substance of what Christ said, rather than the exact expressions which he employed, that the sacred writers were instructed to preserve. Three of the four accounts agree in telling us that there was a double blessing or giving of thanks, the first at the breaking of the bread, the second at the giving of the cup. But no record whatever is preserved of the words in which these benedictions or prayers were couched; a silence, not perhaps without reason, considering that it is in and by the consecration prayer of the priest, regarded as corresponding to these benedictions, that the mysterious change in the elements is by some supposed to be effected. Two of the four accounts agree in telling us that there was an interval—how occupied is not told—between the two acts, that of breaking the bread and handing round the cup; the one taking place while the Supper was in progress, the other not till it was ended. Two also of the four accounts agree in telling us that it was as they were eating, that is, partaking in the ordinary way of the Paschal supper, that the bread of the new Christian rite was blessed and broken.

It is not possible, indeed, with the broken and imperfect lights that we have here in hand, to have anything like a distinct conception of the exact order of events. It is, however, almost certain, that it was after the paschal lamb was eaten, and towards the close

therefore of the Jewish ordinance, that Christ either interrupted the ordinary course of the feast, or turned that which had been the final distribution of a portion of the unleavened bread to a new and peculiar use. Anyhow, we may well believe that there was something in our Lord's manner when he took the loaf in hand and lifted up his voice in prayer, and blessed and brake, that closed every lip and fixed on him every eye. The wonder heightened when he said, "Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me." It may have been, we presume it was, a silent interval which occurred, till the time came for the last cup of the feast, of the cup of blessing, to be handed round. Having blessed it also, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink ye all of it: for this is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

How, then, we ask ourselves, after having studied as minutely as we can all that has been told us of the first observance of this ordinance, how, at what times, and in what manner, did our Lord intend that it should be celebrated in his church? The first disciples, the apostles themselves, had to put the same question, and we know something of the way in which they answered it. They could not, of course, connect it any more, as Christ had done, with the paschal supper, but, following so far, as they thought, their Lord's example, they did connect it with a social meal; and so full of love were they, so anxious to have the memory of their risen Saviour ever before them, they continued daily breaking the bread from house to house. The associating, however, of the religious rite with a common supper led speedily to abuse. The secular and the social vitiated the spiritual, till, in such a case as that which occurred at Corinth, all the sacredness and awe and tender love with which the bread of this ordinance had at first been broken, were lost amid the tumult of a riotous entertainment, in which some ate as the hungry eat, and in which others were drunken. The strong hand of St. Paul was put forth to check so glaring an outrage on all the decencies of Christian worship. Under his rebuke the churches began to discountenance the practice which had opened the door to this abuse. The social meal, under the name of *Agapè*, or love-feast, was dissociated altogether from the religious observance. The Lord's Supper ceased to be a supper. It was celebrated in the morning or mid-day, and not in the evening. The daily changed into the weekly observance, where it long stood; the weekly into the monthly, where it still stands in many churches; the monthly, in some cases, into the yearly, as was long the custom in our own country.

Does not all this teach us how free in this matter the church has been left by its great Founder—how little he cared about the form as compared with the spirit in which the memory of his dying love was to be preserved and perpetuated? As to time, and place, and order, and outward circumstance, he left all loose. He framed no directory; he did not even leave behind any example that could be exactly copied. It has been so ordered, both as to the original words and actions of our Lord, and the accounts that we have of them, that all attempts to reenact, as it were, the scene in the guest-chamber are futile and vain.

Two things, indeed, appear to be essential to a right conception of it. First, that in some way or other we recognise this ordinance as a social meeting. It is by sitting down at one table, and partaking together of the food spread thereon, that the ties of brotherhood and friendship are, in common life, expressed and maintained. And that true believers are without distinction and on equal terms, invited to sit down at the tables of the Christian communion, to be partakers of that one bread—is not this designed to teach them that they form one body, one brotherhood, all whose members should be bound together by the spirit of love and sympathy, and readiness to bear each other's burdens, and to give each other help? The existing state of matters in our large Christian societies, when so many who know nothing of one another associate in this holy ordinance, stands in the way of this being realized. Nevertheless, it ought ever to be regarded as one part of its intention, to impress upon us the unity of the Christian brotherhood, their oneness with one another, and the duties of universal charity which this unity, this oneness, involves.

Still more striking, however, and still more important is it, to notice what the source, and bond, and seal of this union of all true Christians with one another is, as symbolized and represented in this chief rite of our religion. Christ would unite us to one another by bringing us to the same table, and dividing out to us the same bread and wine. But that bread and wine, what are they? His own body, his own blood; we have no true union with each other, but by and through such a union with himself as is represented by the image—almost too strong, we might think, and somewhat rude and harsh, yet one of the aptest that could be used—of our taking him and feeding upon him—eating his flesh and drinking his blood.

## XVIII.

## GETHSEMANE.\*

## THURSDAY.

THE paschal celebration over, and his own supper instituted, Jesus and his disciples united in singing a hymn. We should like to have been told exactly what the words were, in singing which the voices of Jesus and the eleven blended. If, as there is much reason to believe, they were those of the one hundred and fifteenth, one hundred and sixteenth, one hundred and seventeenth, and one hundred and eighteenth psalms, with what singular emotion must our Lord have repeated the verses: "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me? The stone which the builders refused is become the headstone of the corner."

The hymn having been sung, and the words recorded in the fourteenth chapter of the gospel of St. John having been spoken, Jesus said to his disciples, "Arise, let us go hence." At his command they rise and are ready to follow him. But he does not immediately go forth. It grieves him to break up the interview. He will prolong it to the uttermost; give to them the last moments that can be spared. As they cluster round him, he continues his address. At last it closes with these comforting words: "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." So ended that discourse, which, spoken originally to a small and undistinguished company in a rude upper chamber at Jerusalem, has already won for itself an audience vaster and more varied than ever listened to the words of any other speaker upon earth, and which has rendered but a small part of the wide service of instruction and comfort which it is destined to discharge to the sinful and sorrowful children of our race.

Our Lord's last act of intercourse with his own in the upper chamber was to bear them upon the arms of faith before his Father, in the offering of that sublime intercessory prayer which he has left behind him as a specimen of the advocacy which, as their great High Priest, he conducts for his people before the throne.

\* Matt. 26 : 36-46 ; Mark 14 : 32-42 ; Luke 22 : 39-46.



From the room rendered so sacred by all that had been said and done in it, Jesus and the eleven at last depart. It was near midnight, but the full moon lighted them on their way. They passed out of one of the city gates, descended into the valley of Jehoshaphat, crossed the Kedron, and made their way to the garden of Gethsemane,\* the well-known retreat where Jesus had often lately spent the night; consecrating beforehand the scene of his great agony by seasons of solitary prayer. At the entrance to this garden Jesus said to his disciples generally, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder." There was nothing strange in his desiring to be alone. He had often before severed himself in like manner from the twelve. But there was something singular in it—showing that he was looking forward to something more than an ordinary night of solitary rest or prayer—when, instructing the others to remain where they were, he took Peter, and James, and John along with him farther into the interior of the garden. They had been the three chosen and honored witnesses of his transfiguration on the mount. Was it to behold some new display of his power and glory that they were taken now again apart? Was the Father about to answer the petition so lately offered, and in their presence to glorify his Son? Were they again to gaze upon their Master clothed in light, shining all over with a brightness that would throw the moonlight which bathed them into shadow? Wondering what was to come, Peter, James, and John follow their Master as he leads them into the recesses of Gethsemane, towards some spot perhaps which overhanging olive-branches or the swelling hillside shaded, intercepting the moonbeams. Ere they reach that spot he turns to speak to them. There is a great change upon his countenance, but it is into gloom, not into glory. He looks as one "sore amazed and very heavy," upon whose spirit the horror of some great darkness, the pressure of some great burden, has fallen. He speaks, but the calmness and serenity which had breathed in every tone of his voice are gone. "My soul," he says to them, "is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Strange aspect for their Master to wear; strange words for him to speak! They had never seen that countenance so overshadowed. They had never heard him utter such mournful language. What can it be that has wrought so sudden a change? What deep trouble of the soul is

\* However ready to do so, we could not, when in its neighborhood, persuade ourselves that the traditional is the real Gethsemane. It is too close to the city and too near a road which, at least in passover times, must have been a very public thoroughfare. Higher up the valley of Jehoshaphat there is a recess in the western slope of Mount Olivet which seemed to us much more likely to have been the scene of our Lord's agony.

it that vents itself in these words? Peter perhaps might have put some question to his Master, but the time is not given him. "Tarry ye here," Christ adds, "and watch with me." Leaving them in their turn amazed, he withdraws from them about a stone-cast, (forty or fifty yards,) not so far off but that they can see, and even hear him. He reaches the shaded spot, he kneels, he falls upon his face, and from the prostrate form the prayer goes up to heaven: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." It may have been but a short time that Jesus remained in this posture of prayer. Brief as it was, on rising and returning to where he had left the three disciples, he found them sleeping. Waking them, and singling out Peter, the one of whom this should have been least expected, he says to him, "Simon, sleepest thou?" Mark 14:37. 'After all your late professions of being so willing to follow me to prison and to death, "what, couldst not thou watch with me one hour?"' Then to him and to the others he says, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." How did the Saviour look, on this his first return from the place of his agony? Was the trouble gone from his countenance? did nothing but the shadow of it remain? The interval must have brought some relief. When he rose from the ground, retraced his steps, bent over his disciples, stirred them up from their slumbers, spoke to them as he did, is it not evident that for the time the current of his thoughts was changed; a temporary calm was spread over his troubled spirit; the inward conflict was not such as that which had cast him on the ground, and drawn from him the prayer to his Father? Again, however, our Lord leaves the three and retires to the same spot. As he reaches it, the heavy agony is again upon his soul—heavier, if that could be, than before. Again it bows him to the earth; again he prays as before, but now still more earnestly, the inward pressure telling so upon the outward form, that his sweat is "as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." The human power to bear, strained to its utmost limits, seems ready to give way. There appears "an angel from heaven strengthening him." And now there is a second pause or interval of respite, in which the three are visited a second time, and a second time found sleeping. But he does not waken them as he had done before; or if he does, he does not stay to speak to those whose eyes are heavy, and who "wist not what to answer him." He is content to stand for a moment, bending on them a look of compassion and unutterable love. The call to the struggle comes again. A third time he is on the cold, bare earth; a third time the same words, ex-

pressive of the same inward conflict and suffering, go up to heaven. The thrice-repeated prayer is so far answered. The strength is given, the conflict is over. "Then he cometh to his disciples and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners." Even as he speaks he hears the sound of approaching footsteps, or catches sight of the high priest's band, with the traitor at its head, and so he adds, "Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me." From face and form and voice and spirit every trace of the inward tumult and agony is gone. Never perhaps in all his life did the Saviour appear in calmer, serener dignity than when he stepped forth to meet the betrayer: nor did the calmness and serenity for a moment forsake him, all through the trial, and the mocking, and the scourging, and the crowning with thorns, and the nailing him to the cross. Nor did the soul-conflict and soul-agony return till, from the midst of the darkness that for three hours wrapped the cross, we hear a cry, kindred to those which cleft the midnight air within Gethsemane, "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

Passing with Jesus from the upper chamber into the garden, one of the first impressions made upon us is that of the suddenness and greatness of the transition. Delivered within the compass of the same hour, what a contrast between the prayers of the one place and of the other—the one so calm, so serene, so elevated; the others so dark and troubled! Look first at him as, with eyes uplift to heaven, he offers up the one; look at him again as, prostrate on the earth, in garments moist with sweat and blood, he offers up the other. Listen to him as, speaking on a level with the throne itself, he says, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." Listen to him as, in petitions brief and broken, wrung from a spirit torn with most intense sorrow, he says, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." What a mighty and mysterious descent from that height above to these depths beneath! And how rapidly described; the transition so quick, with nothing outward to account for it. If it be, as we know it is, a severe trial for our humanity to pass rapidly from one extreme of emotion to another, if the trial be greater the stronger the contrast between the two states of feeling, and the quicker the change takes place—if rapid passage from extreme joy to extreme grief, or the reverse, have been known even to loose the silver cord and break the golden bowl of life—let us ask ourselves to what a trial, apart from all consideration of the depth or intensity of the emotions themselves, must the humanity of our Lord have been exposed during the

last twelve hours before his death, arising from the very suddenness and greatness of those alternations through which he passed.

But wherein did the great sorrow which came upon him in Gethsemane consist? It is inconceivable and inadmissible that it was the prospect of those outward sufferings and that bodily death which lay between him and the grave in which he was next day to be laid, that agitated to such an extreme degree the spirit of our Saviour, and wrung from him the thrice-repeated prayer. Admitting to the fullest extent that our nature shrinks from suffering, recoils from death; that suffering and dying are those strange things "for which human nature in the beginning was not created;" that the purer, fuller, more perfect that nature is—the more abhorrent to it they must be, and that, consequently, the intensity of the shrinking, the depth of the recoil, would be at its maximum point in the sinless humanity of our Lord—yet are there overbalancing considerations which forbid the idea that had it been mere ordinary sufferings, such as any other man placed in the same circumstances might have felt, and a mere ordinary death that Jesus had before him, he would or could have shrunk in such a way beneath the prospect. For let us remember that if, on the one hand, we attribute to Christ every sinless infirmity to which our nature is liable, on the other hand we must attribute to him every virtue, and that in its highest quality and degree of which that nature is capable, and among these patience and fortitude. Other men have endured as much physical suffering, have passed through as ignominious and as torturing deaths, without the slightest ruffling of spirit, with the calmest and most heroic fortitude, mingling even ecstatic songs of praise with the sounds of the crackling fagots by which their bodies were consumed. Are we to degrade our Saviour beneath the common martyr-level, or believe that a burden that others bore so easily prostrated him in the garden, forced from him those prayers, and wrapped him in that bloody sweat?

It is true indeed that Christ had a clear and perfect vision beforehand of all that he was to endure, such as no other can have, and this may have heightened the power of the dark prospect that lay before him. But such a vision was his from the beginning. Why was it only now, here at Gethsemane, that it so specially and deeply affected him? Besides, his complete and accurate foreknowledge extended beyond the cross, embraced the resurrection and ascension. If in the foreground there were humiliation, suffering, and death, in the background were exaltation and triumph. Should not the depression produced by the vivid foresight of the one, have been relieved by the hope and joy excited by the as vivid foresight of the other?



Relinquishing the idea that it was the prospect of the physical sufferings of the cross that induced the agony of the garden, it may be thought that this agony was due to the presentiment of that deeper inward woe which wrung with such bitter anguish the spirit of our Lord, from the hidden depths of which there went up the mysterious utterance, "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" But is this likely? With us imagination may swell out some threatening and impending calamity into such false proportions, that we may actually suffer more from the anticipation than from the reality. Could it have been so with Christ? In a mind like his, where all the faculties and feelings of our nature existed in perfect balance, we should naturally expect that the due proportion would be observed between the pressure produced by anticipation and that produced by the actual event; that the one should be but a shadow of the other. Is it so here? Is the Gethsemane sorrow a mere shadow of the sorrow of the cross? All that is told us of it testifies that under it, whatever it was, the whole power of endurance that was in our Lord's humanity was tried and tested to the very last degree. It was a purely mental anguish, yet such a strain did it exert upon the body that it forced the life-current of the blood out of its accustomed channels, and sent it forth to mingle with the drops of sweat that fell to the ground. It was an agony so intense that three times, with the utmost vehemence of desire, the request went up to heaven, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." We can readily understand that from a quarter of which we shall presently have to speak, our Saviour's spirit might and did lie open to an anguish of such a peculiar nature and intensity that it is saying nothing more of him than that he was a man, to say that such strong crying for relief issued from his lips; the vehemence of the desire for this relief offering a gauge and measure of the pressure that produced it. But we cannot understand, if it were not the actual endurance itself, but only the foresight of it that was operating on him, how he who had all along been looking forward to the decess he was to accomplish at Jerusalem, who was so straitened till it was accomplished, who knew so well that it was for that very end he came into the world—should at this one time be so moved by the mere prospect of the cup being put into his hand, that he should so vehemently recoil from it, and so ardently desire that it might pass from him.

We feel ourselves shut up to the conclusion that the agony of the garden was inward, unique, mysterious, impossible to fathom; the same in source, the same in ingredients, the same in design, the same in effect with our Lord's spiritual sufferings on the cross; an integral

and constituent part of the endurance to which, as our spiritual head and representative, he submitted, and which sprang from our iniquities being laid upon him, in a way and manner that is not open to us to comprehend. "He bare our sins in his own body on the tree," offering there, not merely or mainly his body to the Roman executioner, but his soul in sacrifice to God. Consummated upon the cross, this soul-offering was made also in the garden. Jesus spake of an hour and a cup which became so identified in the minds of the evangelists, that they are used interchangeably in the narrative of the passion. The hour and the cup were one, embracing the entire suffering unto death. The hour was on him, and he passed through it; the cup was in his hand, he put it to his lips and drank it equally in the garden and on the cross. In passing through that hour, in drinking that bitter cup, he made the great atonement for our transgressions. Some great obstacle there must have been in the way of our restoration to the Divine favor. Whatever it was, by the obedience unto death of God's dear Son it has been wholly removed. "Father," he said, "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." If ever from this earth a cry for relief from suffering went up to God to which his ear was open, surely it was this; whom should the Father shield from sorrow if not his own dear Son? Yet the cup did not pass away. The prayer was answered in the strength to endure being given, but not in the endurance being removed. To that endurance we are to look as furnishing the ground of our forgiveness and acceptance. It has taken every obstruction which our guilt, the holiness and justice of the Divine character, the integrity and majesty of the Divine law, the stability and prosperity of God's great spiritual empire, interposed between us and the immediate and entire blotting out of all our iniquities.

Spread over the whole of our Lord's suffering life, it was condensed in the agony of the garden and the anguish of the cross. But why broken into these two great sections, of which we can scarcely tell which was the larger, or in which the suffering was the more intense? Why but that in the sight of such a sorrow descending upon the Saviour's spirit, in the absence of all inflictions from without—in the quiet of the garden, in the loneliness of the midnight hour—before a hand had been laid on him, before thorn had touched his brow, or scourge his back, or nail his hands and feet, we might learn to separate in our thoughts the mental and spiritual from the bodily sufferings of Christ; to recognize the truth of the saying, that the sufferings of his soul formed the soul of his sufferings.

But while the breaking of the great endurance into these two por-

tions—the one borne in the garden, and the other upon the cross—carries with it this instructive lesson, is nothing to be learned from the subdivision of the former into those three parts which were separated so distinctly from one another? Does this subdivision not carry with it an indication of the perfect voluntariness on Christ's part of the sufferings of Gethsemane? To give them their vicarious and atoning virtue, it was necessary that Christ's sufferings should throughout possess this character. Many things about the time and manner and circumstances of his death were obviously so ordered as to make it evident that he laid down his life of himself, that no man took it from him. Much also about the agony of the garden evinces that it was voluntarily undergone, and might easily, had Christ so willed, have been avoided. Do not those three breaks and pauses—his taking up and laying down the cup, his coming to and going from his disciples, correspond best with the idea of the agony being one not laid upon him from without or endured by compulsion, but one which he could and did take on or lay off, into which he entered by an act and effort of thought and will; by the vivid realizing of the spiritual relationship in which he stood to the great world of transgressors; his voluntary susception of their sins?

Apart from any such view of it, let us look at the manner of his dealing with the disciples in the course of his agony. Why did Jesus, in planting the three at the entrance of the garden, say to them, "Tarry ye here and watch with me"? It may have been, to assign to them the post of watchful sentinels, the duty of guarding him against surprise, of giving him timely notice of approaching danger. He had already distinctly warned them of some impending peril, of a storm that was about to burst on him, of such force and pressure that it would drive every one of them from his side. He had told them that one of themselves was that night to betray him. Although at the time none but John knew about the traitor, the abrupt departure of Judas must have excited their attention, and John had time and opportunity on their way out to the garden to tell them on what errand he had gone. Jesus knew when he dismissed him that prompt action was needed; and what he did, Judas must have done quickly. He had to go to some of the men with whom he had made his compact, and tell them that he was ready instantly to fulfil it. He knew where Jesus would go. They might seize him there at dead of night, without danger of popular tumult. They had not intended to arrest him during the feast, but the opportunity now offered is too tempting for them to resist. He may be in their hands before day dawn. His trial and condemnation can quickly be de-

spatched. Let instant execution follow, and before the people gather for the morning sacrifice the hated Galilean may be removed. They at once agree with the proposal of the traitor, and as the small company in the upper chamber is breaking up, in another part of the city a larger one is assembling to move under the leadership of the betrayer.

Nothing of this was known to the disciples, yet something might have been suspected. When Jesus placed them at their posts, and bade them watch with him, might they not naturally enough have regarded this as a summons to them to guard his hours of prayer and rest from the approach of the enemy? Nor does the fact that it was the fixed and predetermined purpose of Christ to wait for and voluntarily surrender himself to the high priest's band, militate against the idea that this duty was laid on them. And had they proved true to such a charge—scattered as they were like outlying pickets, first the three, and then farther off the eight—had they kept a strict lookout upon the path that led out from the city, each eye searching the shady places, each ear open to catch the sound of approaching footsteps, long ere it reached the spot the betrayer's company might have been detected, the warning given, and a timely flight effected. But the sentinels slept at their posts, till their Master came and roused them with the words, "Rise, let us be going: behold, he that betrayeth me is at hand."

Christ's call to watchfulness and prayer was not so much for his sake as for theirs. It was that they might not enter into temptation so as to be overcome by it. Thick-coming and heavy woes were impending over himself—the arrest, the trial, the condemnation, the crucifixion. He would prepare for all by prayer. When Judas comes he will find his Master just risen from his knees, the fitter thereby to pass in serene composure through all that lay before him. And he knows that trials await his disciples as well as himself: they will have to pass through the shame and the reproach of being recognised as his followers; they will have tests applied to their fidelity needing more strength than they now possess. He bids them watch and pray that the needed strength may be imparted. They neglect the counsel, they waste the precious interval. The betrayer is upon them and their Master; upon him fresh from prayer, upon them all unprepared, roused from their heavy sleep.

In our lesser sorrows we throw ourselves upon the sympathy of others; in our greater we seek solitude and wrap ourselves in silence. The solitude breeds selfishness. In bearing our heavy burdens we are apt to become self-engrossed and careless about others. How



did the Saviour act in the hour of his so bitter grief? The strong instinct of humanity was upon him, and he would be alone, yet not alone. Had absolute solitude been sought for, he would have planted the whole eleven at the entrance into Gethsemane, and himself gone so far into the interior that no human eye had been on him, no earthly witness near. In taking Peter, and James, and John so far along with him, and placing them where they may have seen and heard, does not a craving for human sympathy reveal itself? He will not have them close beside him when the mysterious agony is experienced. Into it, from its nature as well as from its depth, he knows they cannot enter. But he would have them near, looking on at a distance, following him with such broken sympathy as they can give. It will be a solace and a support to him; and had they watched and given him the sympathy he craved, no angel from heaven might have been needed; theirs might have been the honor and the happiness of strengthening him in the hour of weakness. But whatever solace or support they might have given was withheld. They sleep on all the time, roused but for a moment to relapse into repose. And when he comes to them at last, is there not something like mournful irony and reproach in his words, "Sleep on now, and take your rest"? 'The time for watching, praying, sympathizing is past; no longer can your sleeping do any harm, your watching do any good. The opportunity is for ever gone, the good is irrevocably lost, the evil irreparably done.'

It does not so much surprise us that at the first Peter, and James, and John should have fallen asleep. It had been a long, exciting evening, and by the strange sorrow that had filled their breasts they were weakened for watchfulness. But that after the first visit and the pointed rebuke, Christ should come a second and a third time and find them sleeping still, it needed his own Divine compassion to forgive and overlook. His comings and goings, his mingling of these repeated visits to the disciples with the great atoning grief, how high in our esteem should this raise our Lord and Saviour: how near to our hearts should it bring him!

And ere we leave Gethsemane, let a parting thought be bestowed on the great example Christ has left us of the spirit in which all heavy trials and sorrows should be met and borne. A stone-cast measured the distance in the garden which separated him from the nearest of his followers; but who shall measure for us that distance in the spiritual world which then separated the Man of Sorrows from every other sufferer of our race? His outward separation and solitude, how imperfect an emblem of the inner solitude of his soul! From the depths of that lonely agony do we not hear a voice saying

to us, "Behold! and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow"? But though so far removed from us, there is a sense in which we must have fellowship with this suffering of Christ, must drink of the same cup, and be baptized with the same baptism. With us also there come times when all the strength we have is strained to the uttermost and is ready to give way. There are Gethsemanes in the followers' as in the Master's life. When they come, let us look at and try to copy his example. Being in agony, he prayed simply, earnestly, repeatedly, using the same words again and again. Is any cup of more than usual bitterness put into our hands, let us too pray in the same spirit and in the same manner. He mingled care and thought for others with his own intensest sorrow. In his weakness he accepted an angel's help. Let not the heaviest grief that ever comes upon us shut our heart to gentle pity. And whoever they be that come to sympathize with and to help us, let us count them as angels sent from heaven, and give them an angel's welcome. "Let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." It was not sinful in him to desire relief from poignant grief, nor is it so in us. But with us as with him, let the desire for relief mingle with and be lost in the spirit of an entire submission to the will of our Father in heaven.



# THE LAST DAY OF OUR LORD'S PASSION.

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## I.

### THE BETRAYAL AND THE BETRAYER.\*

"THE night on which he was betrayed"—that long, sleepless, checkered, troubled night—the last night of our Lord's suffering life—that one and only night in which we can follow him throughout, and trace his footsteps from hour to hour—through what strange vicissitudes of scene and incident, of thought and feeling, did our Saviour on that night pass! The meeting in the upper chamber, the washing of the disciples' feet, the keeping of the Hebrew passover; the cloud that gathered round his brow, the sad warnings to Peter, and the terrible ones to Judas; the institution of his own Supper, the tender consolatory discourse, the sublime intercessory prayer; the garden; its brief and broken prayers, its deep and awful agony; the approach of the high priest's band, the arrest, the desertion by all, the denials by one; the private examination before Annas, the public arraignment before the Sanhedrim; the silence as to all minor charges, the great confession, the final and formal condemnation to death; all these between the time that the sun of that Thursday evening set, and the sun of Friday morning rose upon Jerusalem. We are all, perhaps, more familiar with the incidents of the first half of that night, than with those of the second. Of its manifold sorrows, the agony in the garden formed the fitting climax. Both outwardly and inwardly, it was to the great Sufferer its hour of darkest, deepest midnight. Let us join him now as he rises from his last struggle in Gethsemane, and follow till we see him laid in Joseph's sepulchre.

The sore amazement is past. Some voice has said to the troubled

\* Matt. 26 : 47-56; Mark 14 : 43-50; Luke 22 : 47-53; John 18 : 2-11.



waters of his spirit, Peace, be still! Instead of the stir and tumult of the soul, there is a calm and dignified composure, which never once forsakes him, till the same strange internal agony once more comes upon him on the cross. "Rise," says Jesus, as for the third and last time he bends over the slumbering disciples in the garden, "Rise, let us be going. Lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand!" Wakeful as he has been while the others were sleeping, has he heard the noise of approaching footsteps? has he seen the shadows of advancing forms, the flickering light of torch and lantern glimmering through the olive leaves? It was not necessary that eye or ear should give him notice of the approach. He knew all that the betrayer meditated when, a few hours before, he had said to him, "That thou doest, do quickly." He had seen and known, as though he had been present, the immediate resort of Judas to those with whom he had so recently made his unhallowed bargain, telling them that the hour had come for carrying the projected arrangement into execution, and that he was quite sure that Jesus, as his custom all that week had been, would go out to Gethsemane so soon as the meeting in the upper chamber had broken up, and that there they could easily and surely, without any fear of popular disturbance, lay hold of him. The proposal was hailed and adopted with eager haste, for there was no time to be lost—they had but a single day for action left. The band for seizing him was instantly assembled—"a great multitude," quite needlessly numerous, even though resistance had been contemplated by the eleven; a band curiously composed—some Roman soldiers in it from the garrison of Fort Antonia, excited on being summoned to take part in a midnight enterprise of some difficulty and danger; the captain of the temple guard, accompanied by some subordinates, private servants of Annas and Caiaphas the high priests, with some members even of the Sanhedrim among them; (Luke 22:52;) a band curiously accoutred—with staves as well as swords, with lanterns and torches, that, clear though the night was—the moon being at the full,\* they might hunt their victim out through all the shady retreats of the olive gardens, and prevent the possibility of escape. Stealthily they cross the Kedron, with Judas at their head, and come to the very place where all this while Jesus has been enduring his great agony. Yes; this is the place where Judas tells them they will be so sure to find him. Now, then, is the time for the lanterns and the torches. They are saved the search. Stepping out suddenly into the clear moonlight, Jesus himself stands before them,

\* We know it was so from the day of the month on which the passover was celebrated.

and calmly says, "Whom seek ye?" There are many in that band who know him well enough, but there is not one of them who has courage to answer—"Thee." A creeping awe is already on their spirits. They leave it to others, to those who know him but by name, to say, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus says to them, "I am he;" and as soon as he has said it, they go backward, and fall every one to the ground. Has some strange sight met their eye? has Jesus been momentarily transfigured as on the Mount? have some stray beams from the concealed glory burst forth upon them? Or is it some inward terror shot by a hand invisible through their hearts? Whatever the spell be that has stripped them of all strength, and driven them backwards to the ground, it lasts but for a brief season. He who suddenly laid it on as quickly lifts it off. But, for that short time, what a picture does the scene present! Jesus standing in the quiet moonlight, calmly waiting till the prostrate men shall rise again; or turning, perhaps, a pensive look upon his disciples cowering under the shade of the olive-trees, and gazing with wonder at the sight of that whole band lying flat upon the ground. For a moment or two, how still it is! you could have heard the falling of an olive-leaf. But now the spell is over, and they rise. The Roman soldier starts to his feet again, as more than half ashamed, not knowing what should have so frightened him. The Jewish officer gathers up his scattered strength, wondering that it had not gone for ever. Again the quiet question comes from the lips of Jesus, "Whom seek ye?" They say to him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus answers, "I have told you that I am he. If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled which he spake, Of them which thou hast given me have I lost none."

Perfectly spontaneous, then, on the part of our Divine Redeemer, was the delivering of himself up into the hands of his enemies. He who by a word and look sent that rough hireling band reeling backwards to the ground, how easily could he have kept it there; or how easily, though they had been standing all around him, could he have passed out through the midst of them, every eye so blinded that it could not see him, every arm so paralyzed that it could not touch him? Judas knew how in such a manner he had previously escaped. He must have had a strong impression that it would not be so easy a thing to accomplish the arrest, when he told the men, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and hold him fast." Take him; hold him! it will only be if he please to be taken and to be held that they will have any power to do it. This perfect freedom from all outward compulsion, this entirely voluntary surrender of

himself to suffering and death, enter as necessary elements into the great atonement. And is not its essential element—its being made for others—shadowed forth in this outward incident of the Redeemer's life, 'Take me,' he said, 'but let these go their way.' It was to throw a protecting shield over this little flock, that he put forth his great power over that mixed multitude before him, and made them feel how wholly they were within his grasp. It was to acquire for a time such a mastery over them that they should consent to let his disciples go. It was no part of their purpose beforehand to do thus. They proved this, when, the temporary impression over, they seized the young man by the way, whom curiosity had drawn out of the city, whom they took to be one of his disciples, and who with difficulty escaped out of their hands.

'Take me, but let these go their way.' John saw, in the freedom and safety of the disciples thus secured, a fulfilment of the Lord's own saying in the prayer of the supper-chamber, "Them that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost." We cannot imagine that the beloved disciple saw nothing beyond protection from common earthly danger in the expression which he quotes; but that he saw, in the very manner in which that kind of protection had been extended, a type or emblem of the higher and spiritual deliverance that Christ has accomplished for his people by his deliverance unto death. Freedom for us, by his suffering himself to be bound; safety for us, by the sacrifice of himself; life for us, by the death which he endured: have we not much of the very soul and spirit of the atonement in those few words, 'Take me, but let these go their way'? It is the spiritual David, the great and good Shepherd, saying, "Let thy hand be laid upon me; but as for these sheep, not, O Lord my God, on them."

Judas stood with those to whom Jesus said, "Whom seek ye?" Along with them he reeled back and fell to the ground. Along with them he speedily regained his standing posture, and was a listener as the Lord said, "I have told you that I am he;" inviting them to do with him as they wished. There is a pause, a hesitation; for who will be the first to lay hand upon him? Judas will relieve them of any lingering fear. He will show them how safe it is to approach this Jesus. Though the stepping forth of Christ, and the questions and answers which followed, have done away with all need of the preconcerted signal, he will yet go through all that he had engaged to do; or, perhaps, it is almost a mechanical impulse upon which he acts, for he had fixed on the thing that he was to do toward accomplishing the arrest; he had conned his part well beforehand, and





THE KISS OF JUDAS IN THE GARDEN.



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braced himself up to go through with it. — Hence, when the time for action comes, he stops not to reflect, but lets the momentum of his predetermined purpose carry him along. He salutes Jesus with a kiss! If ever a righteous indignation might legitimately be felt, surely it was here. And if that burning sense of wrong had gone no farther in its expression than simply the refusal of such a salutation, would not Christ have acted with unimpeachable propriety? But it is far above this level that Jesus will now rise. He will give an example of gentleness, of forbearance, of long-suffering kindness without a parallel. Jesus accepts the betrayer's salutation. He does more. He says a word or two to this deluded man: "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" "Is it possible that thou canst imagine, after all that passed between us at the supper-table, that I am ignorant of thy purpose in this visit? I know that purpose well; thou knowest that I do; if not, I will make a last attempt to make thee know and feel it now. Thought of, cared for, warned in so many ways, art thou really come to betray such a Master as I have ever been to thee? But though thou hast made up thy mind to such a deed, how is it that thou chooseth such a cloak as this beneath which to conceal thy purpose? The deed is bad enough itself without crowning it with the lie of the hypocrite—"Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss!"—the last complaint of wounded love, the last of the many and most touching appeals made to the conscience and heart of the betrayer; rebuke and remonstrance in the words, but surely their tone is one more of pity than of anger; surely the wish of the speaker was to arrest the traitor, if it were not yet too late. Had Judas yielded even at that last moment; with a broken and a contrite heart had he thrown himself at his Master's feet, to bathe with tears the feet of him whose cheek he had just polluted with his unhallowed kiss; looking up through those tears of penitence, had he sought mercy of the Lord, how freely would that mercy have been extended to him! who can doubt that he would have been at once forgiven? But he did not, he would not yield; and so on he went, till there was nothing left to him but the horror of that remorse which dug for him the grave of the suicide. ~

We often wonder, as we read his story, how it was ever possible, that, in the face of so many, such explicit, solemn, affectionate appeals, this man should have so obstinately pursued his course. We should wonder, perhaps, the less, if we only reflected what a blinding, hardening power any one fixed idea, any one settled purpose, any one dominant passion, in the full flush and fervor of its ascendancy, exerts upon the human spirit; how it blinds to consequences

that are then staring us in the very face; how it deadens to remonstrances to which, in other circumstances, we should at once have yielded; how it carries us over obstacles that at other times would at once have stopped us; nay, more, and what perhaps is the most striking feature of the whole, how the very interferences, for which otherwise we should have been grateful, are resented; how the very appeals intended and fitted to arrest, become as so many goads driving us on the more determinedly upon our path. So it was with Judas. And let us not think that we have in him a monstrous specimen of almost superhuman wickedness. We should be nearer the truth, I suspect, if we took him as an average specimen of what the passion of avarice, or any like passion, when once it has got the mastery, may lead any man to be and do. For we have no reason to believe of Judas, that from the first he was an utter reprobate. Our Lord we scarcely can believe would have admitted such a man to the number of the twelve. Can it be believed of him that when he first joined himself to Jesus, it was to make gain of that connection? There was but little prospect of worldly gain in following the Nazarene. Nor can we fairly attribute that obstinacy which Judas showed in the last great crisis of his life, to utter deadness of conscience, utter hardness of heart. The man who no sooner heard the death-sentence given against his Master, than—without even waiting to see if it would be executed—he rushed before the men by whom that sentence had been pronounced—the very men with whom he had made his unholy covenant, from whom he had got but an hour or two before the price of blood—exclaiming in the bitterness of his heart, “I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood;”—the man who took those thirty pieces of silver, which his itching palm had so longed to clutch, but which now were burning like scorching lead the hand that grasped them, and flung them ringing on the temple floor, and hurried to a lonely field without the city walls and hanged himself, dying in all likelihood before his Master—let us not think of him that he was utterly heartless—that he had a conscience seared as with a hot iron.

What, then, is the true explanation of his character and career? Let us assume that, when he first united himself to Christ, it was not of deliberate design to turn that connection into a source of profit. He found, however, as time ran on, that to some small extent it could be so employed. The little company that he had joined had chosen him to be their treasurer, to hold and to dispense the slender funds which they possessed. Those who are fond of money, as he was, are generally careful in the keeping, thrifty in their use of it. Judas had

those faculties in perfection, and they won for him that office of trust, to him so terribly dangerous. The temptation was greater than he could resist. He became a pilferer from that small bag. Little as it had to feed upon, his passion grew. It grew, for he had no higher principle, no better feeling, to subdue it. It grew, till he began to picture to himself what untold wealth was in store for him when his Master should throw off that reserve and disguise which he had so long and so studiously preserved, and take to himself his power, and set up his kingdom—a kingdom which he, in common with all the apostles, believed was to be a visible and temporal one. It grew, till delay became intolerable. At the supper in Bethany, it vexed him to see that box of ointment of spikenard, which might have been sold for three hundred pence, wasted on what seemed to him an idle piece of premature and romantic homage. It vexed him still more to hear his Master rebuke the irritation he had displayed, and speak now once again, as he had been doing so often lately, of his death and burial, as if the splendid vision of his kingdom were never to be realized. Could nothing be done to force his Master on to exercise his kingly power? These scribes and Pharisees, who hated him so bitterly, desired nothing so much as to get him into their hands. If once they did so, would he not, in self-defence, be obliged to put forth that power which Judas knew that he possessed? And were he to do so, things could not remain any longer as they were. The passover—this great gathering of the people—would soon go past, and he, Judas, and the rest, have to resume their weary journeyings on foot throughout Judea. Thus and then it was, that, in all likelihood, the thought flashed into the mind of the betrayer to go and ask the chief priests what they would give him if he delivered Jesus into their hands. They offered him thirty pieces of silver, a very paltry bribe—the price in the old Hebrew code of a slave that was gored by an ox—less than £5 of our money; a bribe insufficient of itself to have tempted even a grossly avaricious man, in the position in which Judas was, to betray his Master, knowing or believing that it was unto death. Why, in a year or two Judas might have realized as much as that by petty pilferings from the apostolic bag. But this scheme of his would bring his Master to the test. It would expedite what, to his covetous, ambitious heart, had seemed to be that slow and meaningless course to a throne and kingdom which his Master had been pursuing. Not suspecting what the immediate and actual issue was to be, he made his unholy compact with the high priests. He made it on the Wednesday of the passion week. Next evening he sat with Jesus in the supper-chamber. He found himself detect-



ed; more than one terrible warning was sounded in his ears. Strange, you may think, that instead of stopping him in his course, these warnings suggested, perhaps for the first time, the thought that what he had engaged to do might be done that very night. The words, "What thou doest do quickly," themselves gave eagerness and firmness to his purpose; for, after all, though Jesus seemed for the time so much displeased—let this scheme but prosper—let the kingdom be set up, and would he not be sure to forgive the offence that had hastened so happy a result?

Have we any grounds for interpreting in this way the betrayal? Are we right in attributing such motives to Judas? If not, then how are we to explain his surprise when he saw his Master, though still possessing all his wonderful power, as he showed by the healing of the servant's ear, allow himself to be bound and led away like a felon? How are we to explain the consternation of Judas when he learned that though Jesus, publicly, before the Sanhedrim, claimed to be the Christ, the Son of God, the King of Israel, yet, instead of there being any acquiescence in that claim, a universal horror was expressed, and on the very ground of his making it, he was doomed to the death of a blasphemer? Then it was, when all turned out so differently from what he had anticipated, that the idea of his having been the instrument of his Master's death entered like iron into the soul of Judas. Then it was, that, overwhelmed with nameless, countless disappointments, vexations, self-reproaches, his very living to see his Master die became intolerable to him, and in his despair he flung his ill-used life away.

Accept such solution, and the story of the betrayal of our Lord becomes natural and consistent; reject it, and have you not difficulties in your way not to be got over by any amount of villany that you may attribute to the traitor? But does not this solution take down the crime of Judas from that pinnacle of almost superhuman and unapproachable guilt on which many seem inclined to place it? It does; but it renders it all the more available as a beacon of warning to us all. For if we are right in the idea we have formed of the character and conduct of Judas, there have been many since his time, there may be many still, in the same way, and from the operation of the same motives, betrayers of Christ. For everywhere he is a Judas, with whom his worldly interests, his worldly ambition, prevail over his attachment to Christ and to Christ's cause; who joins the Christian society, it may be, not to make gain thereby—but who, when the occasion presents itself, scruples not to make what gain he can of that connection; who, beneath the garb of the Christian call-

ing, pursues a dishonest traffic; who, when the gain and the godliness come into collision, sacrifices the godliness for the gain. How many such Judases the world has seen, how much of that Judas spirit there may be in our own hearts, I leave it to your knowledge of yourselves and your knowledge of the world to determine.

Let us now resume our narrative of the arrest. Whatever lingering reluctance to touch Christ had been felt, that kiss of Judas removed. They laid their hands upon him instantly thereafter, grasping him as if he were a vulgar villain of the highway, and binding him after the merciless fashion of the Romans. This is what one, at least, of his followers cannot bear. Peter springs forth from the darkness, draws his sword, and aims at the head of the first person he sees; who, however, bends to the side, and his ear only is lopped off. To Christ an unwelcome act of friendship. It ruffles his composure, it impairs the dignity of his patience. For the first and only time a human creature suffers that he may be protected. The injury thus done he must instantly repair. They have his hand within their hold, when, gently saying to them, "Suffer ye thus far," he releases it from their grasp, and, stretching it out, touches the bleeding ear, and heals it: the only act of healing wrought on one who neither asked it of him, nor had any faith in his healing virtue; but an act which showed how full of almighty power that hand was which yet gave itself up to ignominious bonds. Then said Jesus to Peter, "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" He was drinking then, even at that time, of the same cup in regard to which he had been praying in the garden. Not only his agonies in Gethsemane and on the cross, but all his griefs, internal and external, were ingredients in that cup which, for us and for our salvation, he took, and drank to the very dregs—a cup put by his Father's hand into his, and by him voluntarily taken, that the will of his Father might be done, and that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. All this about the cup, and his Father, and the Scriptures, spoken for the instruction and reproof of Peter, must have sounded not a little strange to those chief priests and scribes and elders who have come out to be present, at least, if not to take part in the apprehension, and who are now standing by his side. But for them, too, there must be a word, to show them that he is after all a very brother of our race, who feels as any other innocent man would

feel if bound thus, and led away as a malefactor. "And Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness." A short hour of fancied triumph theirs; the powers of darkness permitted for a short season to prevail; but beyond that hour, light, and a full, glorious, eternal triumph his.

"Then all the disciples forsook him and fled." That utter desertion had been one of the incidents of this night of sorrows upon which his foreseeing eye had already fixed. "The hour cometh," he had said to them in the upper chamber, "yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." It was only during that hurried march from the garden to the judgment-hall that Jesus was left literally and absolutely alone: not one friendly eye upon him; not one friendly arm within his reach. But this temporary solitude, was it not the type of the inner, deeper solitude, in which his whole earthly work was carried on? not the solitude of the hermit or the monk—he lived ever with and among his fellow-men; not the solitude of pride, sullenly refusing all sympathy and aid; not the solitude of selfishness, creating around its icy centre a cold, bleak, barren wilderness; not the solitude of sickly sentimentality, for ever crying out that it can find no one to understand or appreciate. No; but the solitude of a pure, holy, heavenly spirit, into all whose deeper thoughts there was not a single human being near him or around him who could enter; with all whose deeper feelings there was not one who could sympathize; whose truest, deepest motives, ends, and objects, in living and dying as he did, not one could comprehend. Spiritually, and all throughout, the loneliest man that ever lived was Jesus Christ. But there were hours when that solitude deepened upon his soul. So was it in the garden, when, but a stone-cast from the nearest to him upon earth, even that broken, imperfect sympathy which their looking on him and watching with him in his great sorrow might have supplied, was denied to him, and an angel had to be sent from heaven to cheer the forsaken one of earth. So was it upon the cross, in that dread moment, when he could no longer even say, "I am not alone, for my Father is with me;" when there burst from his dying lips that cry—a cry from the darkest, deepest, dreariest loneliness into which a pure and holy spirit ever passed—"My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

Shall we pity him, in that lonely life, these lonely sufferings, that

lonely death? Our pity he does not ask. Shall we sympathize with him? Our sympathy he does not need. But let us stand by the brink of that deep and awful gulf into which he descended, and through which he passed; and let wonder, awe, gratitude, love, enter into and fill all our hearts, as we remember that that descent and that passage were made to redeem our souls from death, and to open up a way for us into a sinless and sorrowless heaven.

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## II.

### THE DENIALS. REPENTANCE, AND RESTORATION OF ST. PETER.\*

WHEN they saw their Master bound and borne away, all the disciples forsook him and fled. Two of them, however, recovered speedily from their panic. Foremost now, and bravest of them all, John first regained his self-possession, and returning on his footsteps followed the band which conveyed Jesus to the residence of the high priest. Coming alone, and so far behind the others, he might have found some difficulty in getting admission. The day had not yet dawned; and at so early an hour, and upon so unusual an occasion, the keeper of the outer door might have hesitated to admit a stranger; but John had some acquaintance with the domestics of the high priest, and so got entrance; an entrance which Peter might not have ventured to ask, or asking, might have failed to get, had not John noticed him following in the distance, and, on looking back as he entered, seen him standing outside the door. He went, therefore, and spoke to the portress, who at his instance allowed Peter to pass in. The two disciples made their way together into the interior quadrangular hall, at the upper and raised end of which Jesus was being cross-examined by Annas. It was the coldest hour of the night, the hour that precedes the dawn, and the servants and officers had kindled a fire in the upper end of the hall where they were gathered. Peter did not wish to be recognized, and the best way he thought to preserve his incognito was to put at once the boldest face he could upon it, act as if he had been one of the capturing band and had as good a right to be there as others of that mixed company, as little known in

\* Matt. 26 : 57-59, 69-75; Mark 14 : 54, 55, 66-72; Luke 22 : 54-62; John 18 : 15-27; Mark 16 : 7; John 21 : 15-17.



this palace as himself. So stepping boldly forward, and sitting down among the men who were warming themselves around the fire, he made himself one of them. The woman who kept the door was standing near. The strong light of the kindling fire, falling upon that group of faces, her eye fell upon Peter's. That surely, it occurred to her as she looked at it, was the face of the man whom she had admitted a few minutes ago, of whose features she had caught a glimpse as he passed by. She looks again, and looks more earnestly. John 18:17; Mark 14:67; Luke 22:56. Her first impression is confirmed. It is John's friend; that Galilean's friend; some friend too, no doubt of this same Jesus. She says so to a companion by her side; but not satisfied with that, wondering, perhaps, at the way in which Peter was comporting himself, she waits till she has caught his eye, and going up to him she says: "Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?" a short, abrupt, peremptory, unexpected challenge. It takes Peter entirely by surprise. It throws him wholly off his guard. There they are, the eyes of all those men around now turned inquiringly upon him; and there she is—a woman he knows nothing of—perhaps had scarcely noticed as he passed quickly through the porch—a woman who can know nothing about him, yet putting that pert question, to which, if he is to keep up the character he has assumed, there must be a quick and positive reply. And so the first hasty falsehood escapes his lips. The woman, however, wont believe him when he says that he does not understand her question. Both to himself and to others around her, she re-affirms her first belief. Peter has to back his first falsehood by a second and a third: "Woman, I am not one of this man's disciples; I know him not." Peter's first denial of his Master.

He has now openly committed himself, and he must carry the thing through as best he can. He is not at ease, however, in his seat with the others around the fire. The glare of that light is too strong. Those prying eyes disturb. As soon as conveniently he can, without attracting notice, he rises and retires into the shadow of the porch, through which in entering he had passed. A cock now crows without. He hears but heeds it not. Perhaps he might have done so, had not another woman—some friend in all likelihood of the portress with whom she had been conversing—been overheard by him affirming most positively, as she pointed him out, "This fellow also was with Jesus of Nazareth." And she too comes up to him and repeats the saying to himself. The falsehood of the first denial he has now to repeat and justify. He does so with an oath, declaring, "I do not know the man." Peter's second denial of his Master.

A full hour has passed. The examination going on at the other end of the hall has been engrossing the attention of the onlookers. Peter's lost composure and self-confidence have in a measure been regained. He is out in the hall again, standing talking with the others; no glare of light upon his face, yet little thinking all the while that by his very talking he is supplying another mode of recognition. And now for the third time, and from many quarters, he is challenged. One said, "Of a truth this fellow was with him." A second: "Did I not see thee with him in the garden?" A third: "Thy speech bewrayeth thee." Beset and badgered thus, Peter begins to curse and to swear, as he affirms, "I know not the man of whom ye speak." Peter's third and last denial of his Lord.

Truly a very sad and humbling exhibition this of human frailty. But is it one so rare? Has it seldom been repeated since? Have we never ourselves been guilty of a like offence against our Saviour? Is there no danger that we may again be guilty of it? That we may be prepared to give a true answer to such questions, let us consider wherein the essence of this offence of the apostle consisted, and by what steps he was led to its commission. His sin against his Master lay in his being ashamed and afraid to confess his connection with him, when taunted with it at a time when apparently confession could do Christ no good, and might greatly damage the confessor. It was rather shame than fear, let us believe, which led to the first denial. It was in moral courage, not physical, that Peter failed. By nature he was brave as he was honest. It was no idle boast of his, "Lord, I will follow thee to prison and to death." Had there been any open danger to be faced, can we doubt that he would gallantly have faced it? Had his Master called him to stand by his side in some open conflict with his enemies, would Peter have forsaken him? His was one of but two swords in the garden; those two against all the swords and other weapons of that multitude. But even against such odds, Peter, bold as a lion, drew his sword, and had the use of it been allowed would have fought it out till he had died by his Master's side. But it is altogether a new and unexpected state of things, this willing surrender of himself by Jesus into the hands of his enemies; this refusal, almost rebuke, of any attempt at rescue or defence. It unsettles, it overturns all Peter's former ideas of his Master's power, and of the manner in which that power was to be put forth. He can make nothing of it. It looks as if all those fond hopes about the coming kingdom were indeed to perish. Confused, bewildered, Peter enters the high priest's hall. Why should he acknowledge who he is, or wherefore he is there?

What harm can there be in his appearing for the time as indifferent to Christ's fate as any of these officers and servants among whom he sits? That free and easy gait of theirs he assumes; goes in with all they say; perhaps tries to join with them in their coarse, untimely mirth. First easy yet fatal step, this taking on a character not his own. He is false to himself before he proves false to his Master. The acted lie precedes the spoken one; prepares for it, almost necessitates it. It was the rash act of sitting down with those men at that fireside, that assumption of the mask, the attempt to appear to be what he was not, which set Peter upon the slippery edge of that slope, down which to such a depth he afterwards descended. Why is it we think so? Because we have asked ourselves the question, Where all this while was his companion John, and how was it faring with him? He too was within the hall, yet there was no challenging or badgering of him. The domestics indeed knew him, and he may be safe from any interference on their part; but there are many here besides who know as little about him as they do about Peter. Yet never once is John questioned or disturbed. And why, but because he had joined none of their companies, had attempted no disguise; his speech was not heard bewraying him. Had you looked for him, you would have found him in some quiet shaded nook of that quadrangle, as near his Master as he could get, yet inviting no scrutiny, exposing himself to no detection.

That first false act committed, how natural with Peter was all that followed! His position, once taken, had to be supported, had to be made stronger and stronger to meet the renewed and more impetuous assaults. So is it with all courses of iniquity. The fatal step is the first one, taken often thoughtlessly, almost unconsciously. But our feet get hopelessly entangled; the weight that drags us along the incline gets at every step the heavier, till onward, downward we go into depths that at the first we would have shuddered to contemplate. In this matter, then, of denying our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, let us not be high-minded, but fear; and, taking our special warning from that first false step of Peter, should we ever happen to be thrown into the society of those who bear no liking to the name or the cause of the Redeemer, let us beware lest, hiding in inglorious shame our faces from him, we be tempted to say or to do what for us, with our knowledge, would be a far worse thing to say or do, than what was said and done by Peter, in his ignorance within the high priest's hall.

The oaths with which he sealed his third denial were yet fresh on

Peter's lips,\* when a second time the cock crew. And that shrill sound was yet ringing in his ears when "the Lord turned and looked upon Peter." How singularly well-timed that look! The Lord is waiting till the fit moment come, and instantly seizes it. It might be wrong in us to say that but for the look, the second cock-crowing would have been as little heeded as the first. It might be wrong in us to say that, but for the awakening sound, the look would of itself have failed in its effect. But we cannot be wrong in saying that the look and the sound each helped the other, and that it was the striking and designed coincidence of the two—their conjunction at the very time when Peter was confirming his third denial by oaths—that formed the external agency which our Lord was pleased to contrive and employ for stirring the sluggish memory and quickening the dead conscience of the apostle. And sluggish memories, dead consciences, are they not often thus awakened by striking outward providences coöperating with the word and with the Spirit? Have none of us been startled thus, as Peter was, amid our denials or betrayals of our Master? Let us bless the instrument, whatever it may be, by which so valuable a service is rendered, and see in its employment only another proof of the thoughtful, loving care of him who would not let us be guilty of such offences without some means being taken to alarm and to recover.

Let us believe, however, that of the two—the sound and the look—the chief power and virtue lay in the latter. "The Lord turned." He turned from facing those scowling judges; from listening to all the false testimony brought forward against him; from bearing all the insults that masters and servants were heaping upon him; from all the excitements of a trial which he knew was to end in his condemnation unto death. Forgetful of self, still thoughtful of his own, he "turned and looked upon Peter." Was that a look of anger; of unmingled, unmitigated rebuke? Such a look might have sent Peter away to hang himself as Judas did; but never to shed such tears of penitence as he went out to weep. The naked eye of the very God-head might be on us; but if from that eye there looked out nothing but stern, rebuking, relentless wrath, the look of such an eye might scorch and wither, but never melt and subdue hearts like ours. Doubtless there was reproach in the look which Jesus bent upon Peter; gentle reproach, all the more powerful because of its gentleness. But that reproach, quickly as it was perceived, and keenly as it was felt, formed but a veil to the tender, forgiving, sympathizing

\* "Immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew." Luke 22:60. See also Matt. 26:74.



love which the Master felt for the erring disciple. Volumes of pity and compassion lay enfolded in that look. It told the apostle how well He, of whom he had just been saying that he knew him not, knew *him*; how thoroughly he knew him when he forewarned him of his fall. But it told Peter at the same time, that it was no thought or feeling of the injury or wrong that had been done personally to himself, which made Jesus fix such an earnest gaze upon him. Not so much of himself as of Peter was he thinking: not for himself, but for Peter was he caring. It was the thought of that wrong which Peter had been doing to himself, which winged the look, and sent it on its hallowed errand into Peter's heart. He felt, as it fell upon him, that it was the look of one, not angrily complaining of injury, not indignantly demanding redress, but only desiring that Peter might feel how unkindly, ungratefully, ungenerously he had acted towards such a Master; of one who wished him above all things to be assured that if he but saw and felt his error, there were readiness and room enough in his heart to receive him back at once and fully into favor—to forgive all, forget all, be all to him he had ever been. Another kind of look the apostle might have encountered unflinchingly, but not a look like that. Instantly there flashed upon his memory those words of prophetic warning, spoken a few hours before in the guest-chamber. Thrice had Jesus forewarned him, that before the cock crew twice, he should thrice deny him. Had he never thought of these words till now? In the distraction of the moment he might have allowed the first cock-crowing to pass unheeded, but how, during the whole hour (Luke 22:59) which followed his first two denials, should that striking warning never once have occurred to his memory? Very strange it seems to us; but very strange are the moods and passions of the mind—what is remembered by it, and what forgotten, when some new strong tide of thought and feeling rushes in, and fills and agitates the soul. In the strange, unexpected, perilous position in which he had so suddenly been placed, Peter had forgotten all—the meeting of the upper chamber, the triple warning, the “Verily, verily, I say unto you,” which had then sounded in his ears. But now, as if the awakened memory, by the very fulness and vividness of their recall, would repair the past forgetfulness, he sees all, hears all again. Those words of warning are anew ringing in his ears, and as he thinks how fearfully exact the fulfilment of those forgotten predictions of his Master has been, a sense of guilt and shame oppresses him. He can bear that look no longer; he turns and hurries out of the hall, seeking a place to shed his bitter tears--tears not like those of Judas, of dismal and hopeless remorse,

but of genuine and unaffected repentance. He goes out alone, but whither? It was still dark. The day had not yet dawned. He would not surely at such an hour, and in such a state of feeling, go back at once into the city, to seek out and join the others who had fled. Such deep and bitter grief as his seeks solitude; and where could he find a solitude so suitable as that which his Lord and Master had so loved? We picture him as visiting alone the garden of Gethsemane, not now to sleep while his Lord is suffering; but to seek out the spot which Jesus had hallowed by his agony, to mingle his tears with the great drops of blood which had fallen down to the ground.

Where and how he spent the two dismal days which followed we do not know. After that look from Him in the judgment-hall, he never saw his Lord alive again. But as on the third morning we find John and him together, we may believe that it was from the lips of the beloved disciple—the only one of all the twelve who was present at the trial before Pilate, and who stood before the cross—that Peter heard the narrative of that day's sad doings; how they bound and scourged and mocked and spat upon the Lord; how they nailed him to the cross, and set him up in agony, to die. And at each part of the sad recital, how would that heart, softened by penitence, be touched; how would it grieve Peter to remember that he too had had a share in laying such heavy burdens on the last hours of his Lord's suffering life! That Master whom he had so dishonorably and ungratefully denied, was now sleeping in the grave. Oh, but for one short hour with him—a single interview—that he might tell him how bitterly he repented what he had done, and get from his Master's living, loving lips the assurance that he had been forgiven! But that never was to be. He should never see him more. Never, grief-blinded man? Thine eye it sees not, thine ear it hears not, neither can that sorrow-burdened heart of thine conceive what even now Jesus is preparing for thee. The third morning dawns. The Saviour rises triumphant from the grave; in rising, sets the angels as sentries before the empty tomb; gives to them the order that, to the first visitors of the sepulchre, this message shall be given: "Go, tell the disciples *and Peter*, that he is risen from the dead." This message from the angel, Peter had not heard\* when he and John ran out together to the sepulchre, and found it empty. But he heard it not long after. Who may tell what strange thoughts that singling out of *him*—that special mention of his name by those angelic watchers of the sepul-

\* Mary Magdalene, on whose report they acted, had seen no angel on her first visit to the sepulchre.

chre—excited in Peter's heart?—How came those angels to know or think of him at such a time as this? It could not have been their own doing. They must have got that message from the Lord himself—been told by him particularly to name Peter to the women. But was it not a thing most wonderful, that in the very act of bursting the barriers of the grave, there should be such a remembrance of him on the part of that Master whom he had so lately denied? Was it not an omen for good? Peter had his rising hopes confirmed, his doubts and fears all quenched, when, some time in the course of that forenoon, waiting till John and he had parted—waiting till he could meet him alone, and speak to him with all the greater freedom and fullness—Jesus showed himself to Peter. Before he met the others to speak peace, he hastened to meet Peter to speak pardon. One of the first offices of the risen Saviour was to wipe away the tears of the penitent.

—“Go your way,” said the angel to the women at the sepulchre, “tell his disciples and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.” The paschal festival, and Christ's own presence, kept the apostles for eight days and more in the holy city. But as, after those two interviews in the evenings of the first two Lord's days of the Christian church, Jesus did not appear to them again, the eleven, presuming that he had gone before them to Galilee, also went thither. The return to their old homes and haunts, the sight of their nets and fishing-boats, the absence of any specific instructions as to the future, suggest to some of them the thought of taking up again their earlier occupation. Seven of them are walking together one evening by the side of the lake. It looks tempting; the boats and the nets are near, and it is the best hour of all the day for fishing. Peter—the very one from whom we should have expected a first proposal of this kind to come—says to them, “I go a fishing.” They all go with him. They toil all the night, but catch nothing. As morning breaks, they see a man standing on the shore, seen but dimly through the haze, but near enough for his voice to be heard across the water. “Children,” he says, “have ye any meat?” They tell him they have none. “Cast the net,” he replies, “on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find.” And now they are not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. This could scarcely fail to recall to the memory of some at least within the boat, that other miraculous draught of fishes, by which, now nearly three years before, three out of the twelve apostles were taught to forsake all and follow Jesus, that he might make them fishers of men. This repetition of the miracle was nothing else than a symbolic renewal of that



first commission, intended to teach the twelve that their apostolic calling still held good. There was one, however, of the seven who gathered round Jesus at the morning meal which he spread for them on the shore, when their fisher's toil was over, whose position towards that commission and apostleship had become peculiar. He had been in the habit of taking a very prominent place among the twelve, and often acted as their representative and spokesman. But on the night of the betrayal he had played a singularly shameful and inconsistent part. They had all, indeed, forsaken their Master; but who would have thought that the very one of them who that night had been so vehement in his assertions that though all men, all his fellow-disciples, should forsake his Master, he never would, should yet so often, and with such superfluous oaths, have denied that he ever knew, or had anything to do with Jesus? True it was that Jesus had forgiven Peter. His fellow-disciples, also, had forgiven that overboastful magnifying of himself above the others. There was something so frank about him, and so genuine; such outgoings of an honest, manly, kindly, generous nature, that they could not bear against him any grudge. They were all now on their old terms with one another. But how will it stand with Peter if that apostolic work has to be taken up again? How will he feel as to resuming his old position among the twelve? Will he not, in the depth of that humility and self-distrust taught him by his great fall, shrink now from placing himself even on the same level with the others? And how will his Lord and Master feel and act as to his reinstatement in that office from which by his transgression he might be regarded as having fallen? To all these questions there were answers given, when Jesus, once more singling Peter out, said to him, "Simon, son of Jonas"—the very giving him his old and double name sounding as a note of preparation for the important question which was to follow, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these," "thy brethren, my other disciples, do?"—a gentle yet distinct enough reminder of that former saying: "Though all men should be offended, I never will;" a delicate yet searching probe, pressed kindly but firmly home into the depths of Peter's heart; a skilful method of testing and exhibiting the truth and depth of Peter's repentance, without subjecting him to the painful humiliation of having the terrible denials of his Master brought up and dwelt upon, either by Jesus in the way of charge, or by himself in the way of confession. The best way of trying any man, whether he has really repented of any sinful deed, is to place him again in the like circumstances, and see if he will act in the like manner.—This is the way in which the Lord now tries Peter. Will



he again compare himself with the others; will he set himself above them; will he say as much now about his love being greater than theirs, as he did then about his courage; will he repeat that boasting which was the precursor of his fall? How touchingly does his answer show that he perfectly understood the involved reference to the past; that he had thoroughly learned its humbling lessons? No longer any comparing himself with or setting himself above others—the old Peter-like frankness and fervor in the “Yea, Lord, I love thee,” but a new humility in it, for he will not say how much he loves, still less will venture to say that he loves more than others; and a deeper humility still, for he will not offer his own testimony as to the love he feels, he will trust no more his own deceitful heart, nor ask his Lord to trust it, but throwing himself upon another knowledge of that heart which had proved to be better than his, he says, “Yea, Lord, *thou knowest* that I love thee.” Our Lord’s reply is a most emphatic affirmative response to this appeal. It is as if he had said at large, ‘Yes, Simon Barjona, I do know that thou lovest me. I know, too, that thou wouldst make no boast of thy love, nor in that or anything else set thyself any longer above thy fellows; and now, that these thy brethren may know and see it too, how hearty thy penitence has been, how thoroughly it has done its humbling work, and how readily I own and acknowledge thee as being all to me thou ever wert; therefore now, in presence of these brethren, I renew to thee the apostolic commission—publicly reinstate thee in the apostolic office—“Feed my sheep.” I need not ask thee again whether thou lovest me more than others. I will prove thee no more by that allusion to the past; but I have once, twice, thrice to put that other general question to thee, that as three times I warned thee, and three times thou didst deny me, even so I may three times restore thee.’ Can we wonder that Peter was grieved, when for the third time that question, “Lovest thou me?” was put to him. It was not the grief of doubt, as if he suspected that Jesus only half-believed his word; but the grief of contrition, a grief which grew into a deeper sadness at the distinct allusion which the thrice-repeated question evidently bore to his three denials. And yet even in that sadness there is comfort; the comfort of feeling that his affectionate Master is giving him the opportunity of wiping away his threefold denial by threefold confession. And so, with a fuller heart, and in stronger words than ever, will he make avowal of his love: “Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee.”

## III.

## THE TRIAL BEFORE THE SANHEDRIM.\*

THE Jews regarded their day as beginning at one sunset and ending with the next. This interval was not divided into twenty-four parts or hours of equal and invariable length. They took each day by itself, from sunrise to sunset, and each night by itself, from sunset to sunrise, and divided each into twelve equal parts or hours; so that a Jewish hour, instead of being, as it is with us, a fixed measure of time, varied in its length as each successive day and night varied in theirs at different seasons of the year. Neither did the Jews begin as we do, reckoning the twelve hours into which the day and night were respectively divided, from midday and midnight, but from sunset and sunrise; their sixth hour of the night corresponding thus with our twelve o'clock, our midnight; their sixth hour of the day with our twelve o'clock, our midday. There were but two periods of the year, those of the autumnal and vernal equinox, when, day and night being exactly equal, the length of the hours in both was precisely the same with our own. It was at one of these periods, that of the vernal equinox, that the Jewish passover was celebrated, and it was on the day which preceded its celebration that our Lord was crucified. It was close upon the hour of sunrise on that day that Jesus was carried to the prætorium, to be examined by the Roman governor. Assuming that he entered Gethsemane about midnight, and remained there about an hour, the interval between the Jewish seventh and twelfth hour of the night, or between our one and six o'clock of the morning, was spent in the trial before Annas and Caiaphas, both reckoned as high priests, the one being such *de jure*, the other *de facto*. They seem to have been living at this time in the same palace into the hall of which Jesus was carried immediately after his arrest. It was in this hall, and before Annas, that Jesus was subjected to that preliminary informal examination recorded in the eighteenth chapter of the gospel of St. John, ver. 19-24. He was to be formally tried, with show at least of law, before the Sanhedrim, the highest of the Jewish courts; but this could not be done at once. Some time was needed to call the members of that court together, and to consult as to the conduct of the trial. Annas was there from the first, awaiting the return of the band sent out to arrest the Saviour. His son-in-law Caiaphas was in all likelihood by his side, eager both and ready

\* John 18 : 19-24 ; Luke 22 : 66-71 ; Matt. 26 : 59-68 ; Mark 14 . 53-65.

to proceed. But they could not act without their colleagues, nor pronounce any sentence which they might call upon the Roman governor at once to ratify and execute. While the messengers, however, are despatched to summon them, and the members of the Sanhedrim are gathering, Annas may prepare the way by sounding Christ, in a far-off, unofficial, conversational manner, and may perhaps extract from his replies some good material upon which the court may afterward proceed. Calling Jesus before him, he puts to him some questions about his disciples and his doctrine; questions fair enough, and proper enough as to their outward form, yet captious and inquisitorial, intended to entangle, and pointing not obscurely to the two main charges to be afterwards brought against him, of being a disturber of the public peace, and a teacher of blasphemous doctrines.

First, then, about his disciples: Annas would like to know what this gathering of men around him meant; this forming them into a distinct society. By what bond or pledge to one another were the members of this new society united; what secret instructions had they got; what hidden objects had they in view? Though Christ might not reveal the secrets of this combination, yet, let it but appear—as by his very refusal to give the required information it might be made to do—that an attempt was here being made to organize a confederation all over the country, how easy it would be to awaken the jealousy of the Roman authorities, and get them to believe that some insurrectionary plot was being hatched which it was most desirable at once to crush, by cutting off the ringleader. Such we know to have been the impression so diligently sought to be conveyed into the mind of Pontius Pilate. And Annas began by trying whether he could get Jesus to say anything that should give a color of truth to such an imputation. Penetrating at once his design, knowing thoroughly what his real meaning and purposes were, our Lord utterly and indignantly denies the charge that was attempted thus to be fastened on him. Neither as to his disciples, nor as to his doctrine—neither as to the instructions given to his followers, nor as to the bonds of their union and fellowship with one another, had there been anything of the concealed or the sinister; not one doctrine for the people without, and another for the initiated within; no meetings under cloud of night in hidden places for doubtful or dangerous objects. “I spake,” said Jesus, “openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret”—that is, in the sense in which I know that you mean and use the term secret—“have I said nothing; why askest thou me?”

This question tells the judge how naked and bare that hypocriti-

cal heart of his lies to the inspection of his prisoner: "Why askest thou me?" "Put that question, Annas, to thy heart, and let it answer thee, if it be not so deceitful as to hide its secrets from thine own eyes. "Why askest thou me?" Art thou really so ignorant as thou pretendest to be; thou, who hast had thy spies about me for well-nigh three years, tracking my footsteps, watching my actions, reporting my words? "Why askest thou me?" Dost thou really care to know, as these questions of thine would seem to indicate? then go, "ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said." A boldness here, a touch of irony, a stroke of rebuke, which perhaps our Lord might not have used, had it been upon his seat and in his office as president of the Sanhedrim that the high priest was speaking to him; had it not been for the mean advantage which he was trying to take of him; had it not been for the cloak of hypocrisy which, in trying to take that advantage, he had assumed. We shall see presently, at least, that our Lord's tone and manner were somewhat different when his more formal trial came on. Christ's sharp sententious answer to Annas protected him—and perhaps that was one of its chief purposes—from the repetition and prolongation of the annoyance. It seems to have silenced the high priest. He had made but little by that way of interrogating his prisoner, and he wisely gives it up. Whatever resentment he cherished at being checked and spoken to in such a manner, he refrained from any expression of it, biding the hour when all his bitter pent-up hatred of the Nazarene might find fitter and fuller vent.

But there was one of his officers who could not so restrain himself, who could not bear to see his master thus, as he thought, insulted, and who, in the heat of his indignation, struck Christ with the palm of his hand—some forward official, who thought in this way to earn his master's favor, but who only earned for himself the unenviable notoriety of having been the first to begin those acts of inhuman violence with which the trial and condemnation of Jesus were so largely and disgracefully interspersed. Others afterwards came forward to mock and jostle and blindfold, to smite and to spit upon our Lord, to whom he answered nothing; but when that first stroke was inflicted, with the question, "Answerest thou the high priest so?" Jesus did not receive it in silence. He answered the question by another: "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" Best comment this on our Lord's own precept: "If thy brother smite thee on the one cheek; turn to him the other also;" and a general key to all like Scripture precepts, teaching us that the true observance of them lies not in the fulfilment of



them as to the letter, but in the possession and exhibition of the spirit which they prescribe. How much easier would it be when smitten upon the one cheek, to turn the other for a second stroke, than to be altogether like our Lord in temper and spirit under the infliction of the stroke! More difficult, also, than any silence, to imitate that gentle answer. The lips might be sealed, while the heart was burning with anger. But it was out of the depths of a perfect patience, a gentleness which nothing could irritate, that the saying came: "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" "Think," says Chrysostom, "on him who said these words, on him to whom they were said, and on the reason why they were said, and these words will, with divine power, cast down all wrath which may rise within thy soul."

But now at last the whole council has assembled, Caiaphas has taken his seat as president, and they go more formally to work. Their object is to convict him of some crime which shall warrant their pronouncing upon him the severest sentence of the law. That the appearance of justice may be preserved,\* they must have witnesses; these witnesses must testify to some speech or act of Christ which would involve him in that doom; and as to any specific charge, two of these witnesses must agree before they can condemn.~ They could have got plenty of witnesses to testify as to Christ's having within the last few days openly denounced themselves, the members of the Sanhedrim, as fools and blind, hypocrites, a very generation of vipers; but to have convicted Christ upon that count or charge would have given to their proceedings against him the aspect of personal revenge. They could have got plenty of witnesses to testify as to Christ's having often broken and spoken slightly of ordinances and traditions of the Pharisees; but there were Sadducees among their own members, and the council might thus have been divided. They could have got plenty of witnesses to testify as to Christ's frequent profanation of the Sabbath; but how should they deal with those miracles, in or connected with the performance of which so many of these cases of profanation of the Sabbath had occurred? They are in difficulty about their witnesses. They bring forth many; but either the charge which it is proposed to establish against Christ comes not up to the required degree of criminality, or the clumsy witnesses, brought hastily forward, undrilled beforehand, break down

\* It would appear that in holding their council during the night, and in condemning Christ solely upon his own confession, the Jews violated express enactments of their own code. See "*Jésus devant Caïphe et Pilate—Réfutation du chapitre de M. Salvador, intitulé 'Jugement et Condamnation de Jésus.'*" par M. Dupin.

in their testimony. Two, however, do at last appear, who seem at first sight to agree; but when minutely questioned as to the words which they allege that more than two years before they had heard him utter about the destruction of the temple, they report them differently, so that "neither did their witness agree." The prosecution is in danger of breaking down for want of proof.

All this time the accused has observed a strange—to his judges an unaccountable and provoking silence. He hears as though he heard not—cared not—were indifferent about the result. It is more than the presiding judge can stand. He rises from his seat, and fixing his eyes on Jesus, says to him, "Answerest thou nothing?" 'Hast thou nothing to say? no question to put, no explanation to offer, as to what these witnesses testify against thee?' Jesus returns the look, but there is no reply; he stands as silent, as unmoved as ever. Baffled, perplexed, irritated, the high priest will try yet another way with him. Using the accustomed Jewish formula for administering an oath—a formula recited by the judge, and accepted without repetition by the respondent—"I adjure thee," said the high priest, "by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." Appealed to thus solemnly, by the first magistrate of his nation, sitting in presidency over the highest of its courts, our Lord keeps silence no longer. But it is in words that must have struck every auditor with wonder that he replies to the high priest's adjuration. He sees quite through the purpose of the high priest. He knows quite well what will be the immediate issue of his reply. Yet he says, "I am;" I am the Christ, the Son of the Blessed; "and ye"—ye who are sitting there now as my judges—"ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." It is our Lord's own free and full confession, his public and solemn assertion of his claim to the Messiahship, and Sonship to God. The time for all concealment or reserve is past. Jesus will now openly, not only take to himself his own name, assume his office, and assert his Divine prerogatives, but in doing so he will let those earthly dignitaries, who have dragged him thus to their tribunal, before whose judgment-seat he stands, know that the hour is coming which shall witness a strange reversal in their relative positions—he being seen sitting on the seat of power, and they, with all the world beside, seen standing before his bar, as on the clouds of heaven he comes to judge all mankind.

The effect of this confession, this sublime unfolding of his true character, and prophecy of his 'second' coming, was immediate, and though extraordinary, not unnatural. The high priest, as soon as he

drank in the real meaning of the words which fell on his astonished ear, grasped his mantle, and rent it in real or feigned horror, exclaiming, "He hath spoken blasphemy." Then rose up also the other judges who were sitting round him, excited to the highest pitch, each more eager than the other to put this question to the accused, "Art thou then the Son of God?" to all of whom there is the same answer as to Caiaphas, "I am." "What further need then," says the president of the court to his brother judges, "have we of witnesses? Now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye?" "What need we," they say to him, taking up his own words, "any further witnesses? for we ourselves have heard it out of his own mouth." And they "answered and said, He is guilty of death." See Deut. 13 : 5; 18 : 20. The unanimous judgment of the court is delivered, (Mark 14 : 64,) and the sentence of death pronounced.

Is there not one among all those judges within whose heart there rise some strange misgivings as he dooms this man to die; not one whom the calmness, the serenity, the dignified bearing of the Lord, as he made the great revelation of himself before them, have impressed with wonder and with awe? Perhaps there is; but the tumult of that vehement condemnation carries him away; or if any inward voice be pleading for the accused, he quenches it by saying that, if Jesus really submit to such a sentence being executed upon him, he cannot be the Messiah, he must be a deceiver; and so he lets the matter take its course.

The pronouncing of the sentence from the bench was the signal for a horrible outburst of violence in the hall below. As if all license was theirs to do with him as they liked; as if they knew they could not go too far—could do nothing that their masters would not approve, perhaps enjoy—the men who held Jesus (Luke 22 : 63)—for it would seem they could not trust him, bound though he was, to stand free before them—began to mock him, to buffet him, to spit upon him, and to cover his eyes with their hands, saying, as they struck at him, "Prophecy to us who it is that smiteth thee." "And many other things blasphemously spake they against him." How long all this went on we know not. They had to wait till the proper hour arrived for carrying Jesus before the Roman governor, and it was thus that the interval was filled up; the meek and the patient One, who was the object of all this scorn and cruelty, neither answering, nor murmuring, nor resisting, nor reproaching. There was but one man in that hall to look with loving, pitying eyes on him who was being treated thus; and in the words which that spectator penned long years thereafter in his distant lonely island, we may see some

trace of the impression which the sight of the great sufferer made: "I, John, who also am your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and *patience* of Jesus Christ." —

The malignant antipathy to Christ cherished by the hierarchal party at Jerusalem had early ripened into an intention to cut him off by death. It was at the beginning of the second year of his ministry that he healed the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda. "The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus which had made him whole. And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and seek to slay him because he had done these things on the Sabbath-day. But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God."\* So far from repudiating this interpretation of his words, Jesus accepted and confirmed it; enlarging the scope, without altering the nature of what he had said about the Father, claiming not only unity in action, but unity in honor with him. John 5:33. So vengeful in their hatred did the Jews of Jerusalem become, that Jesus had to seek safety by retiring from Judea. In the course of the two years which followed, Jesus paid only two visits to the metropolis, and both were marked by outbreaks of the same implacable animosity. His appearance in Jerusalem at the feast of tabernacles excited such an instant and intense spirit of vindictiveness, that one of our Lord's first sayings to the Jews in the temple was, "Why go ye about to kill me?" So well known was the purpose of the rulers, that it was currently said, "Is not this he whom they seek to kill? But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?" John 7:25, 26. Hearing that such things were said, the rulers sent their officers to seize him, but failed in the attempt to get him into their hands. They then confronted him in the temple, and openly charged him with bearing a false record about himself. A strange dialogue ensued, in the course of which, instead of retracting anything which he had formerly said, or attempting to explain it away, Jesus not only exalted himself above Abraham, in whom they boasted, but declared, in language which they could only understand as an

\* John 5:15-18. When, on a succeeding Sabbath, Christ healed the man who had a withered hand, the Pharisees "were filled with madness, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him." Luke 6:11; Mark 3:6. Christ's movements were, from the beginning and throughout, more regulated by the pressure of the persecution to which he was exposed, than a cursory reading of the gospel narrative might lead us to imagine. See John 2:24; 4:1-3; Mark 1:45; Luke 5:17; 11:53-56.



assumption by him of Divine prerogatives: "Before Abraham was, I am." So exasperated were they when he said this, that they took up stones to cast at him; and had he not made himself invisible, and so passed through the midst of them, they would, in the heat of the moment, and without troubling themselves about any formal trial, have inflicted on him the doom of the blasphemer. Having lingered for a few days longer in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, wrought a memorable cure on the man born blind, and delivered that memorable discourse which John has preserved to us in the tenth chapter of his gospel, Jesus again retired from the capital. On his return, two months afterwards, at the feast of dedication, he was met as he walked in the temple in Solomon's Porch, and with some show of candor and anxiety, the question was put to him, "How long dost thou make us to doubt? if thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus did not tell them so plainly as they desired about his being the Christ, but he told them plainly enough, as he had done before, that he was the Son of God. "I," said he, "and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I showed you from my Father: for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." Again our Lord had to protect himself from the storm of their wrath by retreating to Peræa. The message from the mourning sisters recalled him from this retreat. The raising from the dead of a man so well known as Lazarus, in a village so near to Jerusalem as Bethany, produced such an effect that a meeting of the Sanhedrim was summoned to deliberate as to what should be done. The design which they had so long cherished, they now more deliberately than ever determined to accomplish: "From that day forth they took counsel together to put him to death." John 11:53.

Though hurried at last in the time and manner of its execution, it was no hasty purpose on the part of the members of the Jewish council to put our Lord to death. The proposal of Judas did not take them by surprise, the arrest in the garden did not find them unprepared. They must often have deliberated how they should proceed if they once had him in their hands. And when he was at last before them for formal trial, and they were eager to get him condemned, they had not for the first time to consider what charges they should bring against him, and by what evidence the charges might be sustained. Witnesses enough of all kinds were within their easy reach, nor had they any scruple as to the means they took

to get from them the evidence they wanted. But with all their facilities, and all their bribery, they could not substantiate a single charge against Jesus which would justify them in condemning him. Why, when they found themselves in such difficulty, did they not summon into their presence some of those who had heard Jesus commit that kind of blasphemy, upon the ground of which they had twice, upon the spur of the moment, attempted to stone him to death? Testimony in abundance to that effect must have been lying ready to their hands. It seems clear to us that the first and earnest desire of the members of the Sanhedrim was to convict Christ of some other breach of their law, sufficient to justify the infliction of death; and that it was not till every attempt of this kind had failed, that, as a last resort, the high priest put our Lord himself upon his oath. In the form of adjuration which he employed, two separate questions were put to Christ: the one, Whether he claimed to be the Christ; the other, Whether he claimed to be the Son of God. These were not identical. The latter title was not one which either Scripture or Jewish usage had attached to the Messiah. The patent act of blasphemy which our Lord was considered as having perpetrated in the presence of the council was not his having asserted his Messiahship, but his having appropriated the other title to himself. When, after Christ had given his first affirmative reply to the complex challenge of Caiaphas, the other judges interfered to interrogate the prisoner, they dropped all allusion to the Messiahship. "Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God?" and it was upon our Lord's reassertion that he was—upon that, and that alone, that he was doomed to death as a blasphemer. For it was perfectly understood between the judges and the judged, that, in thus speaking of himself, Jesus claimed a peculiar, an intrinsic affinity—oneness in essence, knowledge, power, and glory, with the Father. His judges took Jesus to be only man, and looking upon him as such, they were so far right in regarding him as guilty of blasphemous presumption. In this, then, one of the most solemn moments of his existence, when his character was at stake, when life and death were trembling in the balance, Jesus, fully aware of the meaning attached by his judges to the expression, claimed to be the Son of God. He heard, and heard without explanation or remonstrance, sentence of death passed upon him, for no other reason whatever but his making that claim. On any other supposition than that of his having been really that which his judges regarded him as asserting that he was; on any other supposition than that of his true and proper divinity, this passage of the Redeemer's life becomes worse

than unmeaning in our eyes. There would be something more here than the needless flinging away of a life, by the absence of all attempt to remove the misconception (if misconception it had been) upon which the death-sentence had been based. If only a man, if not the co-eternal, co-equal Son of the Father, in speaking of himself as he did before that Jewish council, Jesus was guilty of an extent, an audacity, an effrontery of pretension, which the blindest, wildest, most arrogant religious enthusiast has never exceeded. The only way to free his character as a man from the stain of such egregious vanity and presumption, is to recognise him as the Son of the Highest. If the divinity that was in him be denied, the humanity no longer stands stainless.

But we believe in both, and see both manifested in the very scene that is here before our eyes. Now, with the eye of sense we look on Jesus as he stands before this Jewish tribunal. It is the Man of sorrows, despised and rejected of men; treated by those lordly judges, and the brutal band of servitors, as the vilest of felons, the very refuse of the earth. Again, with the eye of faith we look on him, and he seems as if transfigured before us, when, breaking the long-kept silence, he declares, "I am the Son of God, and hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." From what a depth of earthly degradation, to what a height of superhuman dignity does Jesus at once ascend! And is it not striking to notice how he himself blends his humiliation and exaltation, his humanity and divinity, as he takes to himself the double title, and binds it to his suffering brow: *The Son of man; The Son of God.*

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#### IV.

##### CHRIST'S FIRST APPEARANCE BEFORE PILATE.\*

CHRIST'S trial before the Jewish Sanhedrim closed in his conviction and condemnation. The strange commotion on the bench, in the midst of which the sentence was pronounced, and the outbreak of brutal violence on the part of the menials in the hall, being over, there was an eager and hurried consultation as to how that sentence could most speedily be executed. Had the full power of carrying out their own sentence been in their own hands, there had been no

\* Mark 15:1; Luke 23:1-4; John 18:28-39.

difficulty; Jesus would have been led out instantly to execution. But Judea was now under the Roman yoke; one bond and badge of its servitude being this, that while the old Jewish courts were permitted to try and to punish minor offences, the final judgment of all capital offences was reserved for the Roman tribunals. A Roman judge must pass the sentence, or, at least, must sign the warrant that consigns the criminal to execution. At Jerusalem, these reserved cases were brought up for adjudication at the time of the great festivals, when the Roman procurator, who resided ordinarily at Cæsarea, visited the capital. For the last six years, Pontius Pilate had held this office in Judea, and he was now in the city on occasion of this passover. His order, therefore, for the execution must be obtained that forenoon, or perhaps not at all. It was now the last day before the passover on which a court of justice could be held; and if not held before six o'clock that evening—when the passover period began, then not for seven days thereafter. To keep Christ so long in bonds, awaiting his presentation to the Roman judge—with an uncertainty, besides, whether Pilate would take up the case after the passover—were a risk too perilous to run. They had, indeed, the whole day before them, and there was time enough to get Pilate's judgment before the passover commenced; but to keep Jesus not only bound, but bound with the order for his crucifixion hanging over him; to keep him so for eight days to come: to keep him so till not only citizens of Jerusalem, but the inhabitants of the whole region round about, had heard all the particulars of his apprehension and condemnation—that also were peril which must, if possible, be avoided. And it could only be avoided by getting the crucifixion over before that sun which was just about to rise had set.

Obviously there was urgent need of haste. The consultation, therefore, was a brief and a hurried one. The resolution was taken to bind Jesus once more—bind him as men condemned to death were wont to be bound—and to carry him at once to Pilate, and get from him the authority to proceed. Thither, therefore, to the official residence of the procurator, accompanied by the whole multitude that had assembled in and around the hall of Caiaphas, Jesus is conveyed. It is a house which the Gentile has occupied and polluted; a house from which the heaven has not been cast out; a house to cross whose threshold at such a time as this—on the very eve of the passover—was to disqualify the entrant from all participation in the holy rite. And, though there be among their number those who, from their position and previous acquaintance, might well have



claimed the privilege of access, and asked a private audience of Pilate, to explain to him the nature of the case in which his interference at such an unseasonable hour was required, yet will not one of these precise, punctilious chief priests, scribes, and councillors venture into that dwelling, lest they should be defiled. They send in their message by some of Pilate's officers or servants. At once, with Roman courtesy, he comes out to them—to where they are all standing around the bound and sentenced Jesus. The glance of a quick eye at once revealed to Pilate the general object of this early visit. These, he knew, as his eye ran round the leaders of the crowd, were the Jewish judges, and this, as that eye rested upon Jesus, some one whom they were anxious to get punished. But why all this haste? What can it have been that has brought together, at such an unusual hour, all these city magnates, and drawn them as suppliants to his door? What extraordinary crime can this man, whom they have borne to him, have committed, that they are so impatient to see him punished? He looks at Christ again. He had tried many; he had condemned many; his practised eye was familiar with the features which great guilt ordinarily wears, but he had never seen a great criminal look as this man looks; nothing here either of that sunk and hollow aspect that those convicted of great crimes sometimes show; nothing here of that bold and brazen front with which they still more frequently are wont to face their doom: he looks so gentle, so meek, so innocent, yet so calm, so self-possessed, so dignified. It does not seem that Pilate knew at first who this bound one was that now stood before him. He must have heard something, perhaps much, of Jesus of Nazareth before. He had been governor of the country all through the years of our Lord's public ministry, and it could scarcely be but that some report of his great sayings and doings must have reached his ear; but no more, perhaps, than Herod had he ever met him—ever seen him face to face; nor does he yet know that this is he. He only knows and feels that never has his eye rested upon one more unlike a hardened reprobate than this. His curiosity roused, his interest excited, the favorable impression which this first sight of the accused has made, coöperating with the instinctive and official sense of justice, Pilate's first words to these judges and heads of the Jewish people are, "What accusation bring ye against this man?" Was that question put in such a way, was it spoken in such a tone, or accompanied by such a look as to convey the idea that he who put it was not at once ready to believe that any very heinous offence had been committed by that man? Perhaps it did carry with it some indication of that

kind. But whether so or not, it indicated this, that Pilate meant to open up or re-try the case, or, at least, to get at and go over, upon his own account, the ground of their condemnation ere he ratified it. He could not but know—if he had not been distinctly told by the messengers whom the Jews sent to him, he saw it plainly enough in all the attendant circumstances—what it was that these Jews were expecting him to do. But he will do it in his own way. He will not sign off-hand, upon their credit and at their bidding, the death warrant of a man like this. Had he been a judge of the purest and strictest honor he would not have signed in such a hurried way the death-warrant of any one; but we know it from other sources, and the Jews who stood before him knew it too, that he was not such a judge, that he had often condemned without a hearing. And it is this which inclines us to believe that there was something in the very first impression that our Lord's appearance made upon Pilate which touched the better part of his nature, and not only stirred within his heart the wish to know what it was of which they accused such a man, but also the desire to ascertain, for his own satisfaction, whether or not that accusation was well founded.

Obviously, to the men to whom it was addressed, Pilate's question was a disappointing one. They did not want, they had not expected to be summoned thus to adduce and to substantiate some charge against Jesus, which, in Pilate's judgment might be sufficient to doom him to death. They had hoped that to save himself the trouble of investigation, and in compliment to them at this passover season—a compliment which, when it cost him nothing, they knew that he was quite willing to pay—he would take their judgment on trust and proceed upon it. And they still hope so. They will let Pilate know how good a right they have to expect this service at his hand; and how much they will be offended if he refuse it. When the question, then, is put to them, "What accusation bring ye against this man?" they content themselves with saying, "If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up to thee"—words of haughtiness and injured pride. 'Do you think that we, the whole assembled Sanhedrim; we, the very first men in this Jewish community over which you happen to have been placed; we, who have come to you, as we are not often wont to do, and are here before your gates to ask a very easy act of compliance with our will—do you think that we would have brought this man to you, if we had not already ascertained his guilt? Do you think that we would either have ventured to offer such an insult to you, or ourselves perpetrate such injustice?' A very high tone this to take,

which they have some hope will yet carry their point for them with the weak and vacillating governor. They are disappointed. They have stirred a pride that is equal to their own. If those Jews wont tell him what kind or degree of criminality it is that they attribute to this man, he, Pilate, wont put himself as a blind tool into their hands. 'If it be your judgment, and your judgment alone, that is to rule this man's case, "Take ye him, then," said Pilate, "and judge him according to your own law;"—a refusal on Pilate's part to do the thing which they first hoped that they might get him to do off-hand; a refusal to countersign their sentence, whatever it was, and by whatever evidence supported. It was as much as saying, that so far as he had yet heard or known anything of this case, it was one which their own law, as administered by themselves, was quite competent to deal with.

Let them take this man, and judge him and punish him as they pleased, provided only that they kept strictly within the limits that their conquerors had laid down. This were wholly to miss their mark. Their tone changes; their pride humbles itself. They are obliged to explain to the governor, what he had known well enough from the first, but what they had not been candid enough to tell him, that it was a sentence unto death which they wished to get executed, a sentence which they were not at liberty to carry out. This determination of Pilate to make personal inquiry into the grounds of that sentence, obliged them also to lodge some distinct and specific charge against Jesus; one of such a kind that the governor would be forced to deal with it; one too of sufficient magnitude to draw down upon it the punishment of death. Now mark the deep hypocrisy and utter falseness of these men. It wont do now to say that it was solely as a blasphemer, as calling himself the Son of God, that Jesus had been condemned before their bar. It wont do to let Pilate know anything of the only piece of evidence upon which their sentence has been founded. What cares he about that kind of blasphemy of which Jesus has been convicted? What cares that Roman law, of which he is the administrator, who or what any man thinks himself to be, or claims to be, in his relationship with God? Let any Jew be but a good and faithful subject to Cæsar, and, so far as Cæsar or Cæsar's representatives are concerned, he may claim any rank he pleases among the gods. It was necessary, therefore, to draw the thickest veil of concealment over their own procedure as judges, although before the examination at this new bar was over, it oozed out that Jesus had made himself the Son of God—with what strange effect upon Pilate's mind we shall presently see. But, in the first



instance, some civil or political offence, some crime against the common law of the land, must be sought for to charge against Jesus. It was not easy to find or fabricate such a crime. Our Saviour had throughout most carefully and cautiously avoided everything like interference or intermeddling with, condemning or resisting, the ordinary administration of law, the policy and procedure of the government. He refused to entertain a question about the rights of inheritance between two brothers, saying to him who sought his interference, "Man, who made me a judge or a ruler over you?" These very men, who are now about to frame their first accusation of him before Pilate, had tried to get him to pass his judgment upon the abstract question as to whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar or not, and had failed in their attempt to entangle him. What concealment, then, what deception, what effrontery of falsehood in it—and it shows to what extremity they were driven—that when forced to adduce some specific accusation, they said, "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ a king!" They here bring three different accusations against him, not one of which—in that sense in which alone they desire that Pilate should understand them—they know is true; and one of which, the second, they know is absolutely, and in every sense of it, false. But it suits their object to represent the accused to Pilate as stirring up sedition, refusing to pay custom, denying the Roman right to reign over Judea, claiming to be king of the country in his own person and of his own right. These, however, were charges which they knew a Roman governor, whose chief business in their country was to see that the rights of the emperor whom he represented should suffer no damage, could not pass by; charges by no means unlikely to be true, for Judea was at this time in a most unsettled state. There were multitudes of Jews who questioned Cæsar's right to tax them; multitudes who regarded him as a foreign usurper. Give them but a chance of success, and the great majority of the people would have risen then, as they rose afterwards, and risked their lives to regain their national liberties. One thing alone was suspicious—that such an accusation should come from such a quarter; that those leaders of the Jews should be so very eager to get a man punished for such a crime. It surely could not be so mighty an offence in their eyes. They were not themselves so very loyal to Rome as to be anxious to see an enemy to the Roman power cut off. Never before, at least, had they displayed any great zeal in that direction. Pilate had no faith in their sincerity. He saw through their designs. Perhaps it was now that, for the first



time, he recognized that it was with Jesus of Nazareth, of whom he had heard so much, that he had to do. He did not entertain, because he did not believe, the charge of his being a seditious and rebellious subject. But there was one part of the accusation which was quite new to him, which sounded ridiculous in his ears: that this poor Nazarene should say that he was a king, the king of the Jews—a very preposterous pretension; one sufficient of itself, if there was any real ground for saying that it ever had actually been set forth, to suggest a doubt as to whether Jesus was a fit subject for any judicial procedure whatever being taken against him. Overlooking all else that had been said against him, Pilate turns to Christ, and says to him, “Art thou the king of the Jews?” He expected nothing else than to get an immediate disclaimer of the absurd pretension. To his surprise, however, Jesus calmly and deliberately replies, “Thou sayest it—I am the king of the Jews.” Very curious this, to hear such a man, in such a condition, and in such circumstances, speak in such a way. He must be some egregious, designing, perhaps dangerous impostor, or, more likely, some wretched, ignorant, half-mad enthusiast or fanatic. He would like to search a little into the matter, and find out how it really stood. The man himself would in all likelihood be the first to supply the clue; he had so willingly and so calmly answered that first question that he would answer others. But it would be better to interrogate him alone, away from these accusers. He might not be so ready to answer further questions in their hearing, or they might interfere and prevent Pilate prosecuting the inquiry in his own way. He retired therefore to his own dwelling, into that part of it called and used generally as the judgment hall, and calls upon Christ to follow him. Jesus at once consents. *He* makes no scruple about crossing that threshold; *he* fears no contagion from contact with the Gentile; his passover has been already held. And now, when they are alone, out of sight and out of hearing of those Jews, Pilate says again to him in a subdued and under tone, as of one really anxious to get at the truth, “Art thou the king of the Jews?” Waiving in the meantime anything like a direct reply, Jesus said to him, “Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?” ‘Art thou but repeating the words of others, or art thou asking out of the depths of thine own inquiring spirit? Hast thou, too, Pilate, felt the inward need of some one to be the governor and lord of thine unruléd, unruly spirit? Lies there behind the outward form and meaning of that question of thine, the indistinct, the inarticulate longing after another king and another kingdom than either Jews or Romans own?’ Was there, indeed, for

one passing moment, far down in the depths of Pilate's struggling thoughts, an element of this kind at work; and did Jesus, knowing that it was there, try thus to bring it up, that he might proceed to satisfy it? If so, what a moment of transcendent interest to the Roman judge, of which had he but known how to take advantage, he too might have entered the kingdom, and shared its security and blessedness! But he does not, he will not stoop to acknowledge, what we suspect was true, that there did mingle in the thoughts and feelings of that moment some element of the kind described. This is too personal, too bold, too home a question of the Nazarene. The pride of the Roman, the judge, swells up within his breast, overbearing his eternal interests as a man, a sinner—and so he haughtily replies: "Am I a Jew? Thine own nation, and the chief priests, have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?" The chance of reaching the individual conscience of this man has passed away; the trial has been made, and it has failed; Jesus must take up the question not as one between him and Pilate—between Pilate's conscience and Pilate's God—but as one simply between himself as a sentenced criminal, and those Jews without, who are his accusers. He will not answer the last question of the governor, "What hast thou done?" upon that he will not enter; it would be of no avail; but he will satisfy Pilate upon one point. He will convince him that he has committed no political offence; that he never meant to set himself in opposition to any of this world's governments. "My kingdom," said he, "is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence:" 'a kingdom rising up and extending itself by earthly weapons, by outward force of any kind, not such is that kingdom which I Jesus call my own.'

But if not, what kind of kingdom can it be? what kind of king is he who rules it? So far satisfied, yet still wondering and perplexed, Pilate puts his question, not in its first specific form, but in a more general one: "Art thou a king then?" 'If not a king like our own Cæsars or your own Herods, if not a king to fight with rival sovereigns, or ask thy subjects to fight for thee, then in what sense a king?' Our Lord's reply, we can perceive, was particularly adapted to the position, character, acquirements, experience, of him before whom he stood—a Roman official of high rank, educated, cultivated; a man of affairs, of large experience of men—men in different countries and of different creeds; not given much, perhaps, to any deep or serious thought about religious matters, yet sufficiently acquaint-

ed with the rival schools of philosophy and religion by which the then great living Roman commonwealth was divided and distracted. Truth, moral truth, religious truth, was the one proclaimed object of research, of which some were saying, Lo, here it is, and others, Lo, there it is; but of which he, Pilate, in pursuit of quite a different object, had learned to think that neither here nor there nor anywhere was it to be found. "It is to this man that Jesus says, speaking in the language that would be most intelligible to him: "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." As these words fell upon the ear of Pilate, one can well enough imagine that the current of his thoughts ran thus: 'It is even as I suspected; here is another of these pretenders, who each would have us to believe that he alone had discovered the undiscoverable, that he alone had found out and got exclusive possession of *the truth*; here is a new Jewish rival of those old Stoics of our own, who were ever teaching us that every wise man was a king—the setter-up of a new system, which he imagines is to dethrone every other one that the world before has seen, whose fancy is that he himself is already upon the throne of his great kingdom—some poor, egotistical, yet quite harmless enthusiast, whose day-dream none would wish to break! One thing, at least, is clear enough, that it is a quite empty, hollow charge these Jews are urging here against him. He may sit as long as he likes upon that ideal throne of his, without the throne of Tiberius being endangered; he may get as many subjects as he can to enter that ideal kingdom of his, and my master, the emperor, have not a loyal subject the less.' And so with that passing question to Jesus, "What is truth?"—a question he does not stay to get answered, as he has no faith that any answer to it can be given; a question not uttered sneeringly or scoffingly, but rather sadly and bitterly, so far as he himself is concerned, having come to regard all truth as a phantom; and with a kindly, tolerant, half-pitying, half-jealous feeling towards Jesus—with that question put to Jesus by the way, Pilate goes out to the Jews, and says to them boldly and emphatically, "I find in him no fault at all;" the faultlessness of Christ acknowledged, his kingly claims scarcely comprehended, and so far as comprehended, rejected, perhaps despised.

Let each of us now ask himself, How stands it as to me and this kingdom of the truth, this one great king of the true? Is Jesus Christ to me the way, the truth, the life? Does truth, simple, pure, eternal truth, stand expressed and exhibited to me in those words,

those prayers, those acts, those sufferings, that life, that death, of Jesus Christ? The witness that he bore to the truth, in the living of that life and the dying of that death, have I listened to it, and believed in it, and submitted to it? Am I of the truth; a simple, humble, earnest seeker after it; and have I this evidence of my being so, that I hear the voice of Jesus, hear it and hail it, among all the conflicting voices that are falling on my ear, as the voice of him who rightfully claims the lordship of my soul? Is truth—the truth as to God, my Creator, my Father, my Redeemer; the truth as to myself, what I am, what I ought to be, what I may be, what I shall be—is this truth not a mere form of sound words, not a mere congeries of acknowledged or accepted propositions; but does it stand before me embodied in the person, the life, the death, the mediation of Jesus Christ; and have I enshrined and enthroned him as King and Lord of my weak, my sinful, my immortal spirit?

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V.

— CHRIST'S APPEARANCE BEFORE HEROD.\*

JESUS had spoken quite frankly and openly to Pilate when they were together, out of sight and hearing of the Jews, alone in the judgment hall. It was quite different when, accompanied by Christ, Pilate came out again to the attendant crowd, and boldly said to them, "I find no fault in this man." So far, then, the chief priests and elders have failed. Failure always embitters. Failure here was what these men were by no means disposed to submit to. Pilate's assertion of his belief in the innocence of Jesus only made them the more vehement in their assertion of his guilt. They became the more fierce. They accused him, Mark tells us, of many things. But the waves and the billows of this swelling wrath of theirs broke harmlessly upon Christ. So absent, so unmoved, so indifferent did he appear, that it seemed as if he had not heard what they were saying against him, or hearing had not understood, or understanding had not heeded. Very different this retirement into himself—this unruffled composure, this unbroken silence, from those eager and animated utterances to which the governor had just been listening in the hall within. Perhaps it is wounded pride that seals the lips of Jesus. To men like these, animated by such a bitter personal hos-

\* Matt. 27:12, 13; Mark 6:14-16; Luke 9:7-9; 13:31, 32; 23:4-12.



tility to him, exhausting every epithet of vituperation, heaping upon him all kinds of charges, Jesus may not condescend to give any answer. But he has not treated, will not treat, the Roman governor in the same way; at least he will surely tell him why it is that he preserves this silence. Pilate says to him, "Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?" There is no reply. The lips are as shut at the question of Pilate as at the accusation of the Jews. Christ has said all that he meant to say, done all that he meant to do, so far as those charges were concerned that they were now bringing against him. He had answered to the Roman judge that the kingship which he claimed was not of a kind in any way to interfere with this world's governments; he had satisfied him of his perfect innocence as a subject of the state; and, having done that, he would say and do no more.

One observes an almost exact parallel as to his silences and his speakings in our Lord's conduct before the Jewish and the Gentile courts of justice. In that preliminary unofficial conversation he held with Annas before the Sanhedrim sat in judgment on his case, Jesus had spoken without reserve, had answered the high priest's questions but too fully, and had brought down upon himself the stroke of the officer who stood by. But when the regular trial commenced, and charges were formally brought forward, and attempted by many witnesses to be substantiated, Jesus held his peace, so long and so resolutely, manifesting so little disposition or desire to meddle in any way with the procedure that was going on, that the high priest rose from his seat, and put to him a question of the same import with that which Pilate afterwards put; and the two questions met with the very same treatment, to neither of them a single word of reply was given. But when the high priest rose, and solemnly adjured Jesus to tell whether he was the Christ the Son of God, just as when Pilate asked whether he was the king of the Jews, and what kind of king he was, our Lord made instant and distinct reply. So far as we can see or understand the principle ruling here the Saviour's conduct, determining the time to speak and the time to be silent, it was this: that when the matter immediately and directly concerned his Divine Sonship and Kingship, he will help his judges in every way he can; nay, he will himself supply the evidence they want. Upon that count he will allow himself to be condemned; he will coöperate with his enemies in bringing about his condemnation; but of all these other lesser charges he will take no account; but leave the manifold attempts to fasten on him any other kind of charge, to break down of themselves, that, his enemies themselves being witnesses, it

might be solely and alone as the Son of God, the King of Israel, that he should be convicted, condemned, and crucified.

Among the many things that the chief priests were now accusing Jesus of in the presence of the governor, hoping still to convince Pilate that he was not the guiltless man that he had taken him to be, there was one thing that they put prominently forward, presented in every form, amplified in every way, on which they mainly relied in their dealings with Pilate—the setting forth of Christ as a ring-leader of sedition. “He stirreth up the people,” stirreth them up against the constituted authorities, preaching rebellion through the whole country, not here in Judea alone, but there also in Galilee where he began this work. This allusion to Galilee as the birth-place of the alleged seditious movement may have been accidental; they may have meant merely thereby to signify how widespread the evil had been which they were calling upon Pilate to check; or it may have been done designedly, with that art which was to leave nothing unsaid or unsuggested, by which the governor could possibly be influenced. Galilee might have been named by them, to suggest to Pilate how difficult it was to produce proof of crime committed in so remote a district; or to remind him that this Galilee, upon which so much of Christ’s time and labor had been spent, was the chosen haunt of the resisters of the Roman authority, the cradle of most of the seditious plots concocted against the emperor’s government; or they might have known of the bad feeling that there was at this time between Pilate and the king of Galilee, and might have imagined that it would be rather gratifying to Pilate than otherwise to lay his hand judicially upon one who might be regarded as a subject of that prince.

However it was, no sooner had the words escaped their lips, than a happy thought suggested itself to Pilate. He is in great difficulty with this case; he knows not how to deal with it. He had never been so importuned as he now was by those chief priests and elders; he never saw them more bent on anything than on the death of this man whom they had brought to him; it would be easy to give him up to their vengeance—he had done as much as that before—but he was convinced of this man’s innocence; there was something too, so peculiar about his whole look, bearing, and conduct, that he could not make up his mind to have any share in sending him to be executed as a common criminal. But now he hears, that part at least, perhaps the greater part of the offence alleged against him had taken place in Galilee, in that part of the country which was not under his jurisdiction, but belonged to that of Herod. This

Herod, the king of Galilee, happened at this very time to be in Jerusalem. Pilate will send the case to him; and thus get the responsibility of deciding it shifted from his own shoulders, by laying it upon one who not only may be quite willing to assume it, but may regard as a compliment the reference of the case to his adjudication. There was a misunderstanding between the two—the Roman procurator and the Galilean king—which the sending of Jesus to the latter for trial might serve to heal. Pilate had done something to displease Herod—something, in all likelihood, in the very way of interfering with what Herod regarded as his rights, and the rights of his subjects. Some Galileans had been up lately at Jerusalem, offering sacrifice there. There had been a riot, which Pilate had promptly and summarily quelled; but in doing so he had mingled the blood of some of these Galileans with their sacrifices—cut them down without inquiring whose subjects they were, or what right they might have to demand a trial in one or other of the Herodian courts. For this, or some such fancied interference with his jurisdiction, Herod had taken offence at Pilate. The recognition of his jurisdiction, then, by sending to him for trial such a notorious person as Jesus, would be the very kind of compliment most soothing to his kingly vanity. Herod recognized and appreciated the compliment; and whatever else Pilate lost by the line of conduct he pursued that day, he at least gained this—he got the quarrel between himself and Herod healed.

The happy thought no sooner occurs to Pilate than he acts upon it. And now, guarded by some Roman soldiers, accompanied by the whole crowd of his accusers, Jesus is despatched to Herod. To enter into the scene that follows, we must go back a little upon this Herod's history. How John the Baptist and he became first acquainted we are not told. A part of the territory (Peræa) over which Herod's jurisdiction extended, ran down along the eastern shore of the Dead Sea, and it is probable that it was in some of the circuits that he made of this district that he first fell in with the Baptist, engaged in his great ministry of repentance. Herod was greatly struck alike with the man and with his teaching. There was a strange fascination about both which drew the attention of the king. As there was nothing about John's ministry to excite or gratify either the intellect or the fancy—no miracles wrought, no new doctrines propounded, no vivid picturing employed; as all was so purely moral, so plain, so pointed, so practical in his teaching, we must believe that what at first drew Herod to John, and made him listen with such pleasure, was that it was a faithful portraiture of men that John was drawing,



an honest and fearless exposure of their sins he made. Herod both admired and approved; but the pleasure that he had in observing John, and in listening to his instruction, was by no means a pure or untroubled one. He feared John, we are told, knowing that he was a just man and a holy. This fear was the fruit of guilt. He knew and felt what a different man John was from himself. The very presence of the Baptist was a rebuke, and he was not yet so hardened as to receive that rebuke without alarm. Nor did this first connection of the king with the Baptist terminate in the mere excitement of certain emotions, whether of respect, or admiration, or fear. Herod did many things, we are told, at John's bidding. I imagine that, in the first stage of their intercourse, John dealt with Herod as he dealt with the Pharisees, and the soldiers, and the publicans; that he laid his hand upon those open and patent offences of which, in common with other rulers, Herod notoriously was guilty. The king not only suffered him to do so, but even went the length of reforming his conduct in some respects, in obedience to the Baptist's instructions. But John did not stop there—did not stop where Herod would have liked; but, stepping boldly into the inner circle of his private life, and laying his hand upon the stain which disfigured it, he said to him, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife."

In all likelihood Herodias was not with Herod when first he met the Baptist, and heard him so gladly, and did many things at his bidding. This meeting may have happened in the wilderness, where Herod ranked but as one of John's large and public audience. But the king invited the Baptist to his court, and it was there, perhaps in presence of Herodias, that the rebuke of that particular transgression was given. Herod's anger was kindled at what appeared an impertinent and officious intermeddling with his private conduct, his family affairs. And there was one beside him who resented that intermeddling still more than he, and was at pains to excite and to nurse his wrath. Herodias would have made short work of it with this sharp reprove; she would have sealed his lips at once in death, so that she should no more be troubled with their unwelcome rebukes; and Herod, notwithstanding all his earlier readiness to hear and to obey, notwithstanding all his respect and regard for John, would have yielded to her desire; but he feared the multitude, and, yielding to that fear, he made a compromise—he cast John into prison, and kept him there for months. But months could not quench the thirst for his blood that had been stirred in the heart of that second Jezebel; still she was asking for the head of the Baptist,



but Herod would not yield—and took no little credit to himself, we may believe, for being so firm. Forgetting that it was the fear of the multitude that overbalanced the influence of the queen, he might even have come to persuade himself that he was dealing very gently and tenderly with the Baptist. But the queen knew him better than he knew himself, and so with diabolic art contrived the plot that was to bring another and still weightier fear, to overbalance in its turn the fear of the multitude.

All went as she desired. The evening for the royal supper came; the chief men of Galilee, with the king in high good-humor at their head, sat down at the banqueting-table. Salome entered, and danced before them; the guests, heated with wine, broke out into rapturous applause. In a transport of delight, the king made the fatal promise, and confirmed it with an oath, that he would give her whatsoever she should ask. Salome went out to consult her mother as to what her request should be. There was little time spent in deliberation. The queen's reply was all ready, for she had conjectured what would occur; and as Mark tells, Salome came in straightway unto the king, and said, "Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger." The king was taken in the snare; no time for thought was given, no way of escape left open. There was the oath which he had taken; there were the witnesses of that oath around the board. He could not break his oath without standing dishonored before those witnesses. The fear of the multitude is overborne by a still higher fear. He gives the order, and the deed is done. Unhappy man! entangled, betrayed by his own rash vow; his very sense of honor turned into the instrument that makes him a murderer! Herod was exceedingly sorry; he knew well how wrong a thing it was that he was doing; it was with bitter self-reproach that the order for the execution was given. For a short time there were the stings of remorse, but these soon lost their power. John was beheaded, and no manifestation of popular displeasure made. John was beheaded; Herodias and Salome were satisfied, and Herod must have felt it a kind of relief to know that, as to him, he should be troubled by them no more. Remorse died out, but a strange kind of superstitious fear haunted Herod's spirit. Reports are brought to him of another strange teacher who has arisen, and to whom all men are now flocking, as they had flocked to the Baptist at the first. And Herod says, "John have I beheaded, but who is this of whom I hear such things?"

What perplexed him was, that it was said by some that John was risen from the dead, by some that Elias had appeared, by others

that one of the old prophets had arisen. Herod hesitated for a time which of these suppositions he should adopt; but at last he decided, and said to his servants, "This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him." He desired to see him; a desire in which there mingled at first so much of awe and dread, that he rather shunned than courted an interview; so much so, that when Christ came afterwards into Galilee, and there was some prospect they might meet, he had in a very artful way, by working on Christ's fears, persuaded him to withdraw from that part of the country. He sent some Pharisees, who said to Jesus, "Get thee out, and depart hence, for Herod will kill thee." Herod never could have really meditated such a deed. We know that afterwards when it was in his power, he declined taking any part in the condemnation and crucifixion of Jesus. It was a cunning device to get Herod out of the embarrassments in which he found that Christ's residence and teaching within his territory might involve him. And so Jesus seems to have dealt with it, when he said to the Pharisees, whom he at once recognized as the agents of the king, "Go," said he, "and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected"—"my times and places for working and for finishing my work, are all definitely arranged, and that quite independently of any stratagem of this cunning king."

At last, at an unexpected time and place, and in an unexpected way, Jesus is presented to him by Pilate; presented as a criminal at the bar, with whom he may use the greatest freedom, as one who will surely be anxious to say and do all he can in order to obtain his release. Herod, therefore, when he sees Jesus thus placed before him, is exceedingly glad—he had heard so much about him, had desired so long to see him. But now, as indicating at once the state of mind and heart into which worldliness and levity and licentiousness have sunk this man, and as supplying to us the key that explains our Lord's singular conduct to him, let us particularly notice, that in the gladness which Herod feels in having the desire to see Christ thus gratified, there mingles no wish to be instructed, no alarm of a guilty conscience, no dread of meeting another Baptist to rebuke him for his iniquities. He has got over whatever compunction he may at one time have felt. He has quenched the risings of remorse within his heart. He has come to be once more on such good terms with himself; so much at ease, that when he looks at Jesus, it is with no disturbing remembrances of that bloody head once brought to him upon a charger—no shrinking dread that he

may see again the Baptist's form, and hear again the Baptist's voice. It is with an eager, idle, prurient curiosity—having a tinge, perhaps, of superstitious wonder in it, that he looks upon Jesus, and proceeds to question him. As compared with John, this new teacher had been distinguished by the working of miracles. And if he wrought them to save others, surely he will do so to save himself. Herod tries in every way he can think of, to induce him to work some wonder in his presence. How does Jesus act when addressed and treated thus by such a man? Shall it be as if the Baptist had indeed risen from the dead? Will Jesus seize upon the opportunity now given, to take up, reiterate, and redouble upon the profligate prince the rebuke of his great forerunner? Shall Herod hear it said to him now, in tones more piercing than ever John employed, It was not lawful for thee to take the Baptist's life? Not thus does Jesus act. Herod puts question after question to him. Jesus looks at him, but opens not his lips. Herod asks and asks again, that some sign may be shown, some token of his alleged power exhibited. Jesus never lifts a finger, makes not a single movement to comply. Herod is the only one of all his judges whom Jesus deals with in this way—the only one before whom, however spoken to, he preserves a continuous and unbroken silence. It does not appear that, from the time when he was presented to Herod, to the time when he was sent away from him, a single word ever passed the Saviour's lips.

That deep and death-like silence, the silence of those lips which opened with such pliant readiness when any word of gentle entreaty or hopeful warning was to be spoken, how shall we interpret it? Was it indignation that sealed those lips? Would Christ hold no intercourse with the man who had dipped his hands in such blood as that of the Baptist? Did he mean to mark off Herod as the one and only man so deeply stained with guilt that he will not stoop to exchange with him a single word? It had been human this, but not divine; and it is a divine meaning that we must look for in this dread and awful silence. There lived not, there breathed not upon the earth the man, however steeped in guilt, from whom that loving Saviour would have turned away, had but the slightest sign of penitence been shown, the slightest symptom of a readiness to listen and be saved. It was no bygone act of Herod's life that drew down upon him the doom of that silence—though doom it little seemed to him to be; it was the temper and the spirit of the man as he stood there before the Lord, after all that he had passed through; it was that which did it. Why, the very sight of Jesus, connected, as he knew or fancied him to be in some mysterious way with John, should have been to Herod



as though one risen from the dead had actually appeared in his presence. It was he, not Jesus, that should have been speechless when they met; or, if he spake at all, it should have been to ask whether, in that world of spirits from which Christ came, there was mercy for a sinner such as he. But, instead of this, instead of anything like this, instead of deep or earnest or anxious feeling of any kind, there is nothing but a vainglorious wish to have some talk with this strange man, with whose name and fame all the country has been ringing, the cravings of an empty curiosity, the thirst for some showy exhibition of knowledge or of power. Let not that man think that he shall hear anything of the Lord. Christ could have spoken such a word as Herod never would have liked to hear again; he could have wrought such a miracle as would have turned the curiosity of the king into terror, his pride into abasement. But he is now to reap the fruit of his own doings, and that fruit is even this, that he is left unspoken to by the Lord from heaven. This silence, had he but interpreted it aright, was perhaps the very thing most fitted to speak home to his conscience and his heart. But he did not understand it, did not enter into the reason of it, never thought of his own past conduct, his own present character, as the cause of it; it stirred him to no inquiry, it awakened in him no remorse. The only feeling that it appears to have produced was irritation; the irritation of mortified vanity. Greatly galled, yet in no way softened, when he could make nothing of this mysterious man, who mantled himself in such obstinate silence, he and his men of war found nothing else to do than to set Christ at naught, and mock him, and array him in a white robe, and send him back to Pilate.

A wonderful instance this of the onward, downward course of crime, particularly of that peculiar course of crime, levity, and licentiousness which Herod had pursued; an instance how speedily and how thoroughly a human heart may harden itself against reproof, quench its convictions, get over its fears, and bring down upon itself that doom, than which there is none more awful: "Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone." To be left utterly and absolutely alone to have all the voices that speak to us of God and duty, the voice of conscience from within, the voice of providence from without, the voice which comes from the lips of Jesus—to have all these voices hushed, hushed into an unbroken, perhaps eternal stillness; can one conceive any condition of a human spirit sadder or more awful? Yet this is the very condition to which the abuse of opportunity, the indulgence of passion, the drowning of the voices when they do speak to us, are naturally and continually tending.



My young friends, let me entreat you especially to take a double warning from such a ease as this: 1st, Beware how you deal with your first religious convictions; tremble for yourselves if you find them dying by a slow death, as the withering, hardening spirit of worldliness creeps in upon your soul, or perishing suddenly amid the consuming fires of some burning passion. They tell us that there is no ice so close and hard as that which forms upon the surface which once was thawed; and there is no hardness of the human spirit so great as that which forms over hearts that once had melted. And, 2d, Beware of hot fits of enthusiasm, in which you go farther in profession than you are prepared to go in steady and sustained practice. Herod went too far at first, and got himself involved among obligations and restraints from which, when the hour of temptation came, he flung himself free by an effort which damaged his moral and spiritual nature more than it had ever been damaged before; his revulsions from religion all the greater on account of the temporary and partial, but hollow and merely emotional entertainment that he had given to its claims. What you do, do it with all your heart; for it is good to be zealously affected in a good thing; but do it intelligently, calmly, deliberately, as those who know and feel that it is the greatest of all transactions that you engage in, when it is with God and for your soul's eternal welfare that you transact.

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## VI.

### — CHRIST'S SECOND APPEARANCE BEFORE PILATE.\*

"THIS child," said good old Simeon, as he took up the infant Jesus into his arms to bless him—"this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign that shall be spoken against; that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." Never were those words more strikingly fulfilled than in these closing scenes of the Saviour's life which we are now engaged in tracing. Then many fell—those forsaking, despairing disciples of Jesus—but fell to rise again; then was that sign set up, against which so many shafts of so many kinds were launched; and then were the thoughts of many hearts revealed—among others those of Judas, and Peter, and Caiaphas, and Herod, and Pilate—revealed by the very closeness of their

\* Luke 23 : 13-16; Matt. 27 : 15-23; Luke 23 : 20-23; Matt. 27 : 26-30; John 19 : 1-16.

contact with Christ, by the peculiarity of those relationships to him into which they were then thrown. Just now our attention was concentrated upon Herod; to-day let us fix our eyes on Pilate, and, taking him up at that stage where we left him, let us try to understand and to follow the working of his thoughts and feelings during those two hours of their earthly lives in which he and Jesus had to do with one another—he in the character of judge, Jesus in the character of one accused and condemned by the Sanhedrim.

You will remember that when first he heard, among the other accusations which the high priests lodged against him, that Jesus had said that he himself was Christ a King—struck at once with the singularity of the pretension, and with the appearance of the man who made it, Pilate called on Christ to follow him into the inner hall of his residence; that there, when alone with him, omitting all reference to any other charge, he asked him particularly about this one; that Christ fully satisfied him as to there being nothing politically dangerous or offensive in the claim to a kingdom which he had put forth; that, bringing Christ out along with him to the Jews, he had said at once and decidedly, “I find no fault in this man;” and that then, taking advantage of a reference to Galilee, he had sent Jesus off to Herod, to see what that Galilean king and judge might think and do. In this way he hoped to be relieved from the painful and embarrassing position in which he felt himself to be placed.

He was disappointed in this hope. Jesus was sent back to him by Herod; sent back without any judgment having been pronounced; sent back in such a way as to indicate that Herod as well as he made light of this poor Galilean’s pretension to be a king—thought it, in fact, more a matter for mockery and ridicule than for serious judicial entertainment. Although a considerable body of the high priests and of the people had accompanied Jesus to and from the bar of Herod, yet in that interval there had been to some extent a scattering of the crowd. Pilate, therefore, called together afresh the chief priests, and the rulers, and the people—the latter particularly mentioned, as Pilate had now begun to think that his best chance of gaining the end upon which his heart was set—the deliverance of Christ out of the hands of his enemies—would be by appealing, over the heads of their rulers, to the humanity of the common people. When all, then, were again assembled, he made a short speech to them, reiterating his own conviction of Christ’s innocence, confirming it by the testimony of Herod, and closing by a proposal that he hoped would be at once accepted—“I will therefore chastise him, and release him.” But why, if he were innocent, chastise him at all? Why not

at once acquit the culprit, and send him away absolved from the bar of Roman judgment? It was a weak and unworthy concession, the first faltering of Pilate's footstep. He cannot but say that he has found nothing worthy of death in this man; he is himself thoroughly satisfied that there is nothing in him worthy of any punishment; but it will please his accusers, it will conciliate the people, it may open the way to their readier acquiescence in his after-dismissal, to inflict on him some punishment, a proposal not dictated by any spirit of cruelty, springing rather from the wish to protect Jesus from the greater penalty, by inflicting on him the less; yet one that weakened his position, that made those sharp-sighted Jews at once perceive that he could be moved, that he was not ready to take up and stand firmly and fixedly upon the ground of Christ's innocence. In deference to them, he has gone so far against his own convictions; he may go farther. He has yielded the inch; they may force him to yield the ell. The proposal, therefore, of chastising Jesus, and letting him go, is rejected, and rejected so as to throw Pilate back upon some other, some new device.

He recollected that at this time of the passover it was a customary thing, in compliment to the great assembly of the Jews in their metropolis, for the procurator to arrest in a single instance the ordinary course of justice, and to release whatever prisoner the people might ask to be given up. He recollected at the same time that there was a notable prisoner, who then lay bound at Jerusalem, one Barabbas, who for sedition and murder had been cast into prison; and the idea occurred to Pilate that if—instead either of asking them broadly and generally who it was that they wished him to release, or whether they would let him choose for them and release Jesus—he narrowed in this instance the choice, and presented to them the alternative of taking Barabbas or Jesus, they could scarcely fail to choose the latter. To give the greater effect to this proposal Pilate ascended the movable rostrum or judgment-seat, which stood upon the tessellated pavement that ran before the vestibule of the palace, and addressing himself to the multitude, said to them, "Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?"

While waiting their answer, a message was brought to him, the messenger having been instructed to deliver it immediately, wherever he was, and however he might be engaged. It came from his wife; was distinct and somewhat authoritative, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." Pilate's wife was not a Jew, nor did she

mix much with the common people of the land. That she should have learned so much of Jesus as to think and speak of him as "that just man"—that she should have been so much concerned when she heard that her husband had been asked to try him, as to take this uncommon step of sending a warning to him on the judgment-seat—may be regarded as a proof how widespread and how deep the impression was that Christ had made.

The time occupied by the hearing and considering this message—whose warning knell rung in strange harmony with the alarm that was already pealing in Pilate's spirit—gave to the chief priests and the rulers the opportunity they were so quick to seize, to prompt the crowd as to the answer they should give to Pilate's proposal. We do not know what kind of stimulants were employed upon this occasion; but we all do know what a flexible, impressible, excitable thing a city mob is, when composed, as this one mainly was, of the lowest of the people; and we can at least easily conjecture what the firebrands were which the expert hands of the priesthood threw in among that mob, inflaming its passions to the highest pitch, and giving the burning mass into their hands, to be directed as they desired. Recovered a little from the disturbance which his wife's message cost him, Pilate turns again to the people, and says to them, "Which of the two, then, will ye that I release unto you?" They say, "Barabbas." Surprised and annoyed at the reply, almost willing to believe there has been some mistake, he puts it to them in another form: "Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?" using the epithet, in the belief that they, as well as he, will look upon its claimant more as an object of pity than of condemnation. But now they leave him in no doubt as to what their will and pleasure is: "Away with this man," they all cry out at once, "and release unto us Barabbas!" "What shall I then do with Jesus, which is called Christ?" This weak and almost pitiful asking of them what he should do, ends, as all such yielding to popular prejudices, cringing to popular passions, ever does; it makes the multitude more confident, more imperious. The governor has put himself into their hands, and they will make him do their will. "What shall I do, then, with Jesus?" "Let him be crucified!" they say. Crucified! It is the first time the word has been named in Pilate's hearing, the first time they tell him articulately what it is they desire to have done with Jesus. Crucify him—give up to that worst and most ignominious of all deaths this meek and gentle man, who he is sure has done no wrong; whom he sees well enough that the chief priests seek to get rid of from some religious antipathy that they have taken against him: can the people



mean it? He had fancied, whatever the chief priests thought, that *they* had a different feeling towards him. "Why," in his surprise he says to them, "what evil hath he done?" But this now excited and uproarious crowd is far past the point of answering or arguing with the governor. Its one and only cry is, "Let him be crucified!" Twice Pilate asks them to tell him what crime he had committed, that they should doom him to a felon's death. He gets but that cry repeated, with louder, angrier voice. Yet a third time—clinging to the hope that he may still succeed in extricating Jesus from their grasp, without putting himself entirely wrong with them—he puts the query, "Why, what evil hath he done?" and gathering up a little strength, as if he were determined to take his own way, and act upon the suggestion that he had thrown out a few moments before, he adds, "I have found no cause of death in him. I will therefore chastise him, and let him go." The very mention of letting him go stirs the crowd to a tenfold frenzy, and now the voices of the chief priests themselves are heard swelling and intensifying the cry, "Crucify him! crucify him!"

Before a storm like this who can stand? He has done—so Pilate thinks—the most he can. If he go farther, he will raise another city tumult which it will cost many lives to quell, and the quelling of which by force may expose him to the very same charges of tyranny and cruelty which, upon more than one occasion of the kind before, had actually been transmitted to Rome against him, and drawn down upon him the rebuke and displeasure of the emperor. The yielding is but the sacrifice of a single life, which may be made without involving the governor in any danger. But the resisting; who can tell in what that might land? Still, however, he is not at ease. He himself scarce knows the reason why; but somehow he never saw the man whose blood he would like so ill to have resting upon him as the blood of Jesus. The private interview they had together in the hall had raised some strange misgivings in Pilate's heart. What is it about this man that has given him so strong a hold upon Pilate, and makes him struggle so hard to get him released? Pilate himself could not have told; but even now, though he has at last resolved to give him up, he will not, cannot do it without trying in some way to throw off his shoulders the responsibility of his death. "When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but rather that a tumult was made, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children." And he delivered Jesus to their will.

Now, let us pause a moment here in the narrative to mark the inner workings of conscience and of humanity in the heart of Pilate. It seemed an ingenious device to give the people their choice. It was resorted to from a desire on his part to rescue Jesus. It would gain, as it first seemed to him, a double object—it would prevent the Jews from saying that he had screened a seditious man, and yet it would rescue an innocent one from death. But to what did it amount? It proceeded on the assumption that Christ was guilty; it asked that as one righteously condemned, he might by an act of grace be released. There lay one fatal flaw in the proposition. But, still worse, it put the matter out of Pilate's hands into those of the people. It was a virtual renunciation on Pilate's part, of the rights and prerogatives of the judge. And by thus denuding himself of his own proper official position, Pilate put himself at the mercy of a fickle and infuriated populace, and gave them that hold and power over him which they so mercilessly employed.

This crying out, "Crucify, crucify him!" as contrasted with the hosannas that a few days before had greeted Christ's entrance into Jerusalem, has been often quoted to prove how rapid the changes in popular sentiment sometimes are, how little a multitude can be trusted. But was it the same crowd which raised the hosannas of the one day, that uttered the "Crucify him, crucify him!" of the other? I rather think that had we been present upon both occasions, and intimately acquainted with the inhabitants of Jerusalem, we should have seen that the two crowds were differently constituted; and that, however true it may be that tides of public feeling often take suddenly opposite directions, this can scarcely be quoted as an instance exactly in point.

But very curious is it to mark the expedient to which Pilate had recourse, in that public washing of his hands. He delivers Jesus up to be crucified. Therein lay his guilt; he might and should have refused to become a party to his crucifixion. Believing Jesus to be innocent, to give him up to death was to take a large share of the criminality upon himself. And yet he thinks that when he gets the Jews to take it upon them, he has relieved himself, if not entirely, yet in great measure, of the responsibility. He regards himself as one coerced by others; and when these others are quite willing to take on themselves the entire weight of the deed, he imagines that this will go a great length in clearing him. And if ever placed under strong compulsion from without, urged on to a certain course of conduct which in our conscience we disapprove, we yield, and in yielding take comfort to ourselves from others saying that they are quite

ready to incur the whole responsibility of the affair, then let us remember that we are acting over again the part of Pilate; and that just as little as that outward washing of his hands did anything to clear him of the stain he was contracting, so little can we hope that the guilt contracted by our being a consenting and coöperating party in any deed of injustice or dishonor, may be thus mitigated or wiped away.

Pilate has given up Jesus to the will of the multitude: given him up to be crucified. \* The judge's work is done; there remains only the work of the executioner. Over that it is no part of the procurator's office to preside. Why, then, does Pilate not withdraw? We might have thought that, wearied with his conflict with the rabble, and oppressed with painful feelings as to its issue, he would have been only too glad to retire—but he cannot; a singular fascination still binds him to the spot—perhaps the lingering hope that he may yet succeed in rescuing the victim from his bloodthirsty enemies. He hands Christ over to his soldiers, to have that scourging inflicted which was the ordinary precursor and preliminary to crucifixion. It might not be difficult from the narratives of eye-witnesses to give you some idea of what a military scourging was, what kind of instrument they used in it, what kind of wounds that instrument made, what terrible torture was inflicted, to what length that torture was often carried; but we would rather have a veil drawn over the purely physical sufferings of our Saviour, than have them pressed prominently upon our eye. We recoil from the attempts so often made to excite a sympathetic horror by vivid details of our Lord's bodily sufferings. We feel as if it were degrading him to present him in that character, in which so many, equal nay superior in their claims upon our sympathy, might be put beside him.

But the scourging did not satisfy the rude and brutal soldiers who had got Christ into their hands. As Romans, these men knew little, cared little about any kingship that Christ might claim. With them it could not be, as with the Jews, a subject of religious hate or scorn. It was a topic alone of ribald mirth, of Gentile mockery. This Roman cohort takes the hint that Herod's men of war had given them; who had thrown a white robe over Jesus, clothing him with something like the garment that their own kings wore, that they might set at naught his vain pretensions to be a king. And now, when the scourging is over, these Roman soldiers will outdo their Jewish comrades; they will make a more perfect pantomime of this poor Galilean's royalty. They take some old military cloak, of the same color with the robes of their emperors; they throw it over his





CHRIST CROWNED WITH THORNS.



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bloody shoulders ; they plait a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, they thrust a reed, as a mock sceptre into his right hand ; and then, when they have got him robed, and crowned, and sceptred thus, they bow the knee, and hail him as a king. But they tire even of that mock homage ; the demon spirit that is in them inspires the merriment with a savage cruelty ; and so, as if ashamed even of that kind of homage they had rendered, they snatch impatiently the reed out of his hand, and smite with it the crown of thorns, and drive it down upon his pierced and bleeding brow, and spit upon him, and smite him with their hands.

All this is done in an inner court or guard-room, out of sight of the crowd that is still waiting without. Pilate sees it all ; makes no attempt to mitigate the suffering or the mockery ; is absorbed in wonder as he gazes upon Jesus—such a picture of silent, gentle, meek, un murmuring, uncomplaining patience ! standing there, and taking all that treatment as though no strange thing were happening, as if he had expected all, were prepared for all, found no difficulty in submitting to all. There is no weakness in that patience ; but a strength, a power, a dignity. The sight moves Pilate's heart : it would move any heart, he thinks ; may it not move even the hearts of those people without ? may it not satisfy their thirst for vengeance to see the suffering Jesus reduced to such a pitiable plight as this ? He will try at least what the sight can do in the way of stirring such sympathy. He goes forth, with Jesus following, and says to the multitude, "Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him ;" then, turning and pointing to Jesus, as he stood wearing still the purple robe and the crown of thorns, bearing on his face and person the marks of all the sufferings and indignities of the guardhouse, Pilate says, "Behold the man !" 'behold and pity, behold and be satisfied—behold, and suffer me, now that I have thus chastised him, to let him go !' Alas ! he knew not the intensity of such fanatic hatred as that which those high priests and rulers cherished, and had, for the time, infused into the obedient crowd ; how it quenches every impulse of kindness in the human heart, and nerves the human hand for deeds of utmost cruelty. That sight to which he points, instead of moving any pity, only evokes fresh outbreaks of ferocious violence ; with unabated breath, the same wild cry from every side salutes the ear of the governor, "Crucify him, crucify him !" It not only disappoints, it provokes Pilate to be baffled thus again, and baffled by such a display of immovable and unappeasable malignity. "Take ye him and crucify him," he says ; 'crucify him as best you can, but do not expect that I shall counte-

nance the deed by any countersigning of your sentence in condemning the man, as if I thought he deserved to die—take ye him and crucify him, for I find no fault in him.’

— But the yielding governor is not in this way to slip out of their hands; he, too, must be a party; and now, at last, they tell him what hitherto they had concealed—to show him that theirs was not such a groundless sentence as he imagined it to be—“We have a law,” they said, “and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.” It is impossible to say what ideas that phrase, “the Son of God,” excited in the mind of Pilate. He was familiar with all the legends of the heathen mythologies, which told of gods and demigods descending and living upon the earth. Like so many of the educated Romans of his day, he had thrown off all faith in their divinity, and yet somehow there still lingered within, a faith in something higher than humanity, some beings superior to our race. And what if this Jesus were one of these! never in all his intercourse with men had he met one the least like this, one who looked so kinglike, so Godlike: kinglike, Godlike, even there as he now stands with a robe of faded purple and a crown of plaited thorns. Never in kingly garments, never beneath imperial crown, did he see a sceptred sovereign stand so serene, so dignified, so far above the men that stood round him. Whatever the ideas were which passed through Pilate’s mind when he heard that Jesus had made himself the Son of God, they deepened that awe which from the first had been creeping in upon and taking possession of his spirit; he was the more afraid. Once again, therefore, he takes Christ apart, and says to him, “*Whence art thou?*” ‘In that first interview, you told me that your kingdom was not of this world, but whence art thou thyself? art thou of this earth, I mean like the rest of us, or art thou other than thou seemest—comest thou indeed from heaven?’ But Jesus gave him no answer. Of all the silences of our Lord that day, of which this in number was the fifth, it seems the most difficult to understand. Was it that Pilate, by the way in which he had then put the question, “What is truth?” without pausing for a reply, had forfeited his right to an answer now? Was it that Pilate was wholly unprepared to receive the answer; that it would have been a casting of pearls before swine to have told him whence Jesus was? Was it that the information, had it been given, while ineffectual to stop his course, might have aggravated Pilate’s guilt, and therefore, in mercy, was withheld? We cannot tell; but we can perceive that the very silence was in itself an answer; for, supposing Jesus had been a mere man, had come into this world even as we all come, would he, had he been sin-

cere and upright, have hesitated to say whence he came? would he have allowed Pilate to remain in doubt? would he have suffered him, as his question evidently implied, to cherish the impression that he was something more than human? We can scarcely think he would. By his very silence, therefore, our Lord would throw Pilate back upon that incipient impression of his Divine origin, that it might be confirmed and strengthened in his breast.

But here again, even as in the first interview, the haughtiness of the man comes in to quench all deeper thought. Annoyed by this silence, this calmness, this apparent indifference of Jesus, Pilate, in all the pride of office, says, "Speakest thou not to me; knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and power to release thee?"—a very idle attempt to work upon the mere selfish fears of Christ;—a question that brings a speedy answer, one in which rebuke and sympathy, are singularly blended: "Thou couldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above." 'That power of thine, to crucify me or release, which I do not dispute, which thou mayest exercise as thou pleasest—do not think that it is a power original, underived, independent. Thou hast it, thou exercisest it but as Heaven permits; thou little knowest, indeed, what thou doest; it is as a mere holder of the power that thou art acting, acting at others' bidding; therefore, that Jewish judge, who knowing far better at least than thou what it was he did, and who it was that he was giving up to death—"therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." There is something surely very impressive here; that, sunk as Jesus was beneath the weight of his own sufferings—sufferings so acute that they well might have engrossed his thoughts and feelings, he yet so calmly weighs in the judicial balance the comparative guilt of the actors in this sad scene, and excuses, as far as he is able, the actings of Pilate. It had something of its proper effect upon the procurator. Instead of diminishing, it but increased the desire he already had to deliver him. He tried again; tried with still greater earnestness to effect his object. But again he failed, for now the last arrow in that quiver of his adversaries is shot at him: "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend; whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar." Pilate knew that already he stood upon uncertain ground with the imperial authorities; he knew that a fresh report of anything like unfaithfulness to Cæsar would cost him his office. The risk of losing all that by occupying that office he had hoped to gain, he was not prepared to face, and so, yielding to this last pressure, he gives way, and delivers up Jesus to be crucified.



Now, let us look a moment at the faults and at the virtues of this man. The fact that it fell to his lot to be governor of Judea at this time, and to consign the Saviour to the cross, inclines us to form exaggerated notions of his criminality. He was not, let us believe, a worse governor than many who preceded and who followed him in that office. We know from other sources that he frequently showed but little regard to human life—recklessly, indeed, shed human blood, when the shedding of it ministered to the objects of his ambition; but we have no reason to believe that he was a wantonly cruel man, or a particularly oppressive and tyrannical governor, as governors then went. His treatment of Christ was marked by anything but a contempt for justice and an absence of all human feeling. He showed a respect, a pity, a tenderness to Jesus Christ that, considering the little that he knew of him, excites our wonder. He struggled hard to evade the conclusion to which, with such unrelenting malignity, the Jewish leaders drove him. No other king, no other ruler with whom Christ or his apostles had to do, acted half as conscientiously or half as tenderly as Pilate did. Herod, Felix, Agrippa—compare their conduct in like circumstances with that of Pilate, and does he not in your estimate rise superior to them all? There is something in the compunctions, the relentings, the hesitations, the embarrassments of Pilate—those reiterated attempts of his to find a way of escape for himself and for Christ, that takes a strong hold upon our sympathy. We cannot but pity, even while forced to condemn. Condemn, indeed, we must; for—

1. He was false to his own convictions; he was satisfied that Christ was innocent. Instead of acting at once and decidedly upon that conviction, he dallied and he parleyed with it; sought to find some way by which he might get rid of that clear and imperative duty which it laid upon him; and by so doing he weakened and unsettled this conviction, and prepared for its being overborne.

2. He exhibited a sad degree of vacillation, inconsistency, indecision. Now he throws all blame upon the priests: "I am innocent of his blood: see ye to it." Again he takes the entire responsibility upon himself: "Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and power to release?" Now he pronounces Jesus innocent, yet with the same breath proposes to have him punished as guilty: now he gives him up, and then he has recourse to every kind of expedient to rescue. Unstable as water, he does not, he cannot succeed.

3. He allowed others to dictate to him. Carelessly and inconsiderately he submits that to their judgment which he should have kept wholly within his own hold. He becomes thus as a wave of the sea,

as a feather in the air, which every breeze of heaven bloweth about as it listeth.

4. He allowed worldly interest to predominate over the sense of duty. Such was the plain and simple issue to which it came at last: Do the thing he knew was right—acquit the Saviour—do that, and run all risks; or do the thing he knew was wrong—do that, and escape all danger. Such was the alternative which was at last presented to him. Alas for Pilate! he chose the latter. But let each of us now ask himself, Had I been placed exactly in his position, with those lights only to guide me that he then had, should I have acted a better and bolder part? We may think and hope we should; but in thinking so and hoping so, let us remember how often, when conscience and duty pointed in the one direction, and passion and self-interest pointed in the other, we have acted over and over again the very part of Pilate; hesitated and wavered, and argued and debated, and opened our ears to what others told us, or allowed ourselves to be borne away by some strong tide that was running in the wrong direction. Nay more, how often have we, knowing as we do, or profess to do, who Christ was, whence he came, what he did for us, and whither he has gone—how often have we given him up into unfriendly hands, to do with him what they would, without even the washing of our own hands, or the saying what we thought of him.

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## VII.

### — THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM WEEPING.\*

THE mockeries of the judgment hall ended, Jesus is delivered into the hands of the officers, to be led away to the place of execution. It cannot now be settled with certainty or exactness, where this hill of Calvary was situated, nor how far it was from the residence of Pilate. It lay, we know, without the city gate, and a very ancient tradition points us to a low, bare, rounded elevation, outside and near the walls, which resembled somewhat in its form a human skull, and is supposed to have got from that resemblance the name it bore, of Golgotha. If that indeed was Calvary, the way was but a short one which the sad procession had to traverse. First, however, ere beginning the mournful march, they strip our Lord of the purple robe they had thrown around his bleeding shoulders, and put his own raiment

\* Matt. 27 : 31-34; Luke 23 : 27-32.

on him. It is not said that they took the crown of thorns from his bleeding brow; he may have worn that to the last. It was part of the degradation of a public crucifixion that the doomed one should assist in carrying to the place of crucifixion the instrument of death. They might have spared this indignity to Jesus; they might have had some compassion as they saw with what a faint and weary step he walked. But compassion has no place in the hearts of these crucifiers, and so they lay the common burden on him. He sinks beneath the load. They must relieve him of it; but who will bear it instead? not one of themselves will stoop to the low office. A stranger, a man from Africa, Simon the Cyrenian, coming in from the country, meets them by the way. He would willingly have let the crowd go by that presses on to Calvary. But he is the very kind of man whom they can turn into a tool to do this piece of drudgery. They lay hold of him and compel him to take up what Jesus was too weak to bear. Unwillingly he had to obey, to turn upon his steps, and follow Jesus, bearing after him the cross; a reluctant instrument of an overbearing soldiery and a haughty priesthood.

So far as we can learn, Simon had no previous knowledge of, had no special interest in Christ; instead of any great sympathy with him at the moment, he may rather have felt and resented it as a hardship, that such a service should have been exacted of him, and in such imperious fashion. But this compulsory companionship with Jesus in the bearing of the cross, carried him to Calvary; the sad tragedy enacted there forced him with so many other idle spectators to the spot. He stood there gazing upon the scene; he heard the words that came from the lips of Jesus; he felt the three hours' darkness come down and wrap them all around. As the darkness cleared away, he saw the centurion standing transfixed before the central cross, as Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. He heard that Roman officer, a stranger like himself, break forth with the exclamation: "Truly this was the Son of God!" What impression all that he saw and heard then made upon him we are not informed. From its being said, however, that he was the father of Alexander and Rufus, whom Mark speaks of as being well-known disciples of the Lord, may we not indulge the belief that He who, when he was lifted up, was to draw all men unto him, that day drew this Cyrenian to himself; that the sight of those sufferings and of that death led Simon to inquire; that the inquiry conducted to discipleship; and that ever after he had to thank the Lord for the strange arrangement of his providence, which led him along that way into the city, at the very time when they were leading Jesus out to be

crucified; that he met the crowd at the very moment that they were wanting some one to do that menial service which in so rough a manner they pressed him to undertake?

Another incident marked the sorrowful procession to Calvary. Some women of the city, looking at him, as first he bends beneath the cross, and then, with aspect so meek and gentle, yet so sad and sorrow-stricken, moves onward to be crucified, have their feelings so deeply touched, that, unable to restrain their emotions, they openly bewail and lament his doom. These are not the women who had followed him from Galilee, and been in the habit of ministering to him. No more than Simon, were they numbered with his disciples. It was not with such grief as any of the Marys would have felt, had they been in the crowd, that these women were affected. They were not lamenting the loss of a teacher, a master, a friend they had learned to revere and love. They had joined the crowd as it gathered in the city thoroughfares through which it passed. The singular but common curiosity to look at men who are soon to die, and to see how they comport themselves in front of death, has drawn them on. Soon, however, out of the three who are going forth to be crucified, their attention fixes upon Jesus. Something of him they may have known before; some part of his story they may have picked up by the way. They hear nothing friendly to him from any who are there around them. The spirit of the crowd they mingle with is one of rude and bitter hatred towards him. But woman's loving eye looks on him, woman's tender heart is melted at the sight; and despite of all the restraint that might have been imposed on them by the tone and temper of that crowd, revelling with savage delight at the prospect of his crucifixion, and led on by some of the chief men of the city, they give free vent to that generous pity which swells their bosoms. They weep as they follow him. This weeping—the only circumstance, so far as we know, attending his passage out to Calvary, that attracted the special notice of our Lord—was the only one which induced him to break the patient silence he has all along observed. But how does he notice it? What does he say? He stops; he turns; he fixes his eye upon the weepers; and he says, “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.”

“Weep *not for me*.” Does he reject that simple tribute of sympathy which they are rendering? Is he in any sense displeased at the tears they shed? Does he blame or forbid such tears? Not thus are we to interpret our Saviour's words. It may be quite true that it was not from any very deep, much less from any very pure or



holy fountain, that those tears were flowing. It may have been nothing about him but the shame and the agony he had to suffer which drew them out. Still, they are tears of kindly pity, and such tears it never could have been his meaning or intention to condemn. He had freely shed such tears himself. They fell before the tomb of Lazarus, fell simply at sight of the weeping sisters, and of the Jews weeping along with them. Sympathy with human suffering, simply and purely as such, claims the sanction of the tears which upon that occasion the Saviour shed; and that sanction covers the bewailing of these daughters of Jerusalem. Jesus is not displeased with, Jesus does not reject, the expression of their pity. So far from this, the tender sympathy that they show for him stirs a still deeper sympathy for them within his heart. This is the way that he acknowledges and thanks them for their tears. He thinks of them, he feels for them; he forgets his own impending griefs as he contemplates theirs. It had been but an hour or so before, that all the people who gathered round the bar of Pilate had cried out, "His blood be on us, and on our children!" How little did they know what a doom it was they thus invoked upon themselves; how near and how terrible! But Jesus knew it; had thought of it perhaps when that wild cry arose; was thinking of it still. He had those scenes of famine, fire, and slaughter, when that ill-fated city of his crucifiers should see the execution of the sentence they had called down upon their own heads—he had them all before his eye when he turned to those women by the way, and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us."

— Many of the very women who were lamenting Jesus by the way, may have perished in the siege of Jerusalem. That siege took place within less than forty years from the day of our Lord's crucifixion. Some of the younger mothers of that weeping band would not have then seen out the threescore years and ten of human life. Their children would be all in middle life, constituting the generation upon which those woes were to descend which, three days before, while sitting quietly on the Mount of Olives with his disciples, looking across the valley upon the Holy City, Jesus had described by saying, that in those days there should be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to that time, no, nor ever should be again. When in the straitness of that terrible siege, before the ter-

rors of the last assault, they crept into the underground passages and sewers of the city; when those who escaped out of the city hid themselves in the dens and rocks of the mountains—then were those prophecies of Isaiah and Hosea, which our Saviour had obviously before him—some of whose words, indeed, he quotes—in part fulfilled. But just as, in that more lengthened discourse which our Lord had so recently delivered to his disciples, he mixed up in a way that it is impossible wholly to unravel, the destruction of Jerusalem, his second coming, and the end of the world; so also, even within the compass of this short speech to the daughters of Jerusalem, it is easy enough to perceive that, beyond that nearer and more limited event, of which these women and their children were to be spectators, our Lord looks forward to the wider judgment, which at the close of all was to unfold the whole world of the impenitent in its embrace.

And widening thus, as we are warranted to do, the scope and bearing of our Lord's words to these daughters of Jerusalem, let us ask ourselves, what message of instruction and of warning do they convey to us and to all men? First, I think we shall not be wrong if we interpret them as indicating to us the unprofitableness of that sympathy with human suffering which takes in nothing but the suffering it sees, and which expends itself alone in tears. The sympathy excited in the breasts of these women of Jerusalem was of this kind. It was the spectacle of human grief then before their eyes which had awakened it; there was a danger, at least, that those sensibilities, so deeply moved as long as the spectacle was before them, should collapse when that spectacle was withdrawn, and leave the heart quickened, it might be, in its susceptibility to the mere emotion of compassion, yet not otherwise improved. 'Weep not, then,' the Saviour says to them, and says to us; 'weep not for me; weep not, or weep not long, and weep not idly, over any sight or story of human suffering which calls not for your interference, which you have no power, not even by the sympathy that you expend upon it, to mitigate; or if, naturally and irresistibly, properly and becomingly, your tears flow forth, stop not at their shedding, do not indolently indulge the mere sentiment of pity; such indulgence may become but a piece of selfish gratification, narrowing the heart and paralyzing the hand for the dispositions and the doings of a true and genuine benevolence.' Pity was never meant by the Creator to be separately or exclusively cultivated as an isolated emotion; it was meant to be the spring and the ally of a ready and generous aid held out to its object; to be the stimulus to, and the support of active effort. And such is the structure of that beautiful and nicely balanced instrument, the human

spirit, that if this established connection between action and emotion be overlooked; if you foster the one without letting it lead on to the other, you do a serious damage to the soul; you create in one region a monstrous overgrowth, in another a stunted deformity; and you dislocate and disconnect what the Creator intended should always be conjoined.

Take here the familiar instance of indulging to excess the reading of exciting fiction—tales in which the hero of the story passes through terrible trials, endurances, agonies of mind and heart. Our heart may pulsate all through with pity as we read; we may wet with tears the page that spreads out some heart-rending scene. Now, I am not going to say that it is in itself a wrong, or a sinful thing, or even a hurtful thing, to read such stories. On the contrary, I believe that it is not wrong; that it may be as beneficial as it is agreeable occasionally to do so. There are peculiar and there are good services to mind and heart that a well-executed fiction may render, which you cannot have rendered in any other way so well. But let such kind of reading usurp the place that should be given to other and better employment; let the taste for it be gratified, without the consideration of anything beyond the pleasure that it yields; let the heart of the reader, with all its manifold affections, give itself up to be played upon continually by the hand of some great master in the art of quickening to the uttermost its sympathies with human passions and human griefs; will that heart, whose sensibilities may thus be stimulated until it yield to the gentlest touch of the great describer, will it be made kinder and better in its dispositions? will it even be made more tender to the sorrows of the real sufferers among whom it lives and moves? Is it not notoriously the reverse? You will find few more selfish, few less practically benevolent, than those who expend all their stores of pity upon ideal woes. It is a deep well of pity, that which God has sunk in most human hearts. They are healing, refreshing, fructifying waters that it sends forth to cover the sorrows of the sorrowful; but if these waters be dammed up within the heart, they become first stagnant, and then the breeders of many noxious vapors, under which the true and simple charities wither away.

But let us now give to our Lord's words a more direct application to himself; to himself as the bearer of the cross. It cannot be thought that all sympathy with the Man of sorrows is forbidden. The recital, especially of his last sufferings, would not have been so full and so minute as it is in the sacred page, had it not been intended to take hold thereby of that sympathy. But the contemplation of Christ merely as a sufferer if it terminate in nothing else than the excite-



ment of sympathy, is a barren contemplation. Offer him nothing besides your compassion, he repudiates and rejects it. It is to dishonor the Redeemer to class him with those unfortunates, those unwilling victims of distress, whose unexampled sorrows knock hard at the heart of pity. Our pity he does not ask, he does not need. He spreads out before us his unparalleled griefs; he says, "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow;" but he does so not to win from us compassion, but to prove how he has loved us, loved us even to the death, suffering and dying for our redemption. His sorrows should set us thinking of our own sins. Those sufferings which rested upon him when he took his place as our great Head and Representative, should bring up before our minds the sufferings which hang suspended over the heads of the finally impenitent and unbelieving.

"Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves; for if these things be done in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" He was himself the Green Tree; the fresh, the vigorous Vine—its stock full of sap, its branches all nourished by union with that parent, life-giving Stem. Was he, then—in condition so unlike to that of fuel ready for the fire—cast into that great furnace of affliction? Had he to endure all its scorching, though to him unconsuming flames? What shall be done with him whose heart softens not at the sight of this divine and all-enduring love; whose heart closes up and hardens against God and Christ, till it becomes like one of those dry and withered branches which men gather and cast into the fire? If God spared not his own Son, but gave him up to the death for us all, who is there, among the rejecters and despisers of such a Saviour, that he will spare? Or if you would have the same argument set before you in yet another form, take it as presented by Peter: "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" I shall make no attempt either to expand or enforce the argument thus employed. Let me only remind you, that it was by these strange and solemn words of warning, "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" that our Lord closed the public teaching of his ministry upon earth. Quiet as our skies now look, and secure and stable as all things around us seem, the days are coming—he has told us among his latest sayings—when those who resist the approaches of his love shall see him in other guise, and when at the sight they "shall cry to the mountains, Fall on us, and to the hills, Cover us; hide us from



the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb : for the great day of his wrath is come ; and who shall be able to stand ? ” How wise and good a thing were it for us all, in prospect of such days coming, to hide ourselves even now in the clefts of the smitten Rock ; to hide ourselves in Jesus Christ as our loving Lord and Saviour ; that, safe within that covert, the tribulation of those days may not reach us.

And now let me crave your attention, for a moment or two, to that singular tie of thought which so quickly linked together in the mind of the Saviour the sight of those sorrowful daughters of Jerusalem, with the fearful doom that was impending over their city. It was very remarkable how frequently and how vividly, in all its minute details, the coming destruction of Jerusalem was present to his thoughts during the last days and hours of his earthly ministry. From the day that he raised Lazarus from the grave—knowing that his enemies had taken counsel together to put him to death—Jesus walked no more openly among the Jews. He retired to the country beyond Jordan near to the wilderness. His hour at last approached, and he set his face to go up to Jerusalem to be crucified. He was in a part of the country that was under Herod’s jurisdiction, and they told him that Herod sought to kill him. It cannot be, he said, that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. The naming of the holy city ; the thought of all the blood of all the prophets that was to cry out against her and to seal her doom, filled his heart with sadness, and instantly he broke out into the exclamation, “ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not ! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate ! ”

On the Saturday before his death he arrives at Bethany. Next day he ascends the Mount of Olives. In the city they have heard of his coming. They go out to meet him, they hail him as they had never done before. Garments and palm-branches are spread upon the ground that he is to tread. Before him and around him the voices of the multitude are shouting “ Hosanna ! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna to the Son of David ! Hosanna in the highest ! ” The ridge of the hill is reached, and Jerusalem bursts upon the view, lying across the valley spread out before the eye. He pauses ; he gazes ; his eyes overflow with tears. How strange it looks to that jubilant multitude ! Ah ! other sounds than their hosannas are falling on the Saviour’s inner ear ; other

sights than that of their waving palm-branches are rising before his prophetic eye. He weeps; and without naming it, looking at the doomed city, and pointing to it, he says: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

Christ's last day in the temple and in Jerusalem was one of great excitement, of varied incident. Question after question about his authority to teach, about the payment of tribute-money, about the resurrection of the dead, is put to him. Attempt after attempt is made to entangle him in his talk. At last, from being the assailed, Jesus in his turn becomes the assailant, puts the question about Christ being David's Son and David's Lord, which none of them can answer, and then proceeds to launch his terrible denunciations at the scribes and Pharisees. Woe is heaped upon woe, till all the righteous blood shed upon the earth seems coming on the men of that generation, and concentratedly upon that city of Jerusalem. Again, as when he first turned his face towards the holy city, the thought melts his spirit into tenderness; the indignation dissolves and passes away, as, taking up the same words he had used before, he exclaims, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate"—our Lord's last words within the temple.

As they went out in the afternoon of that day, "Master," said one of his disciples to him, "see what manner of stones and what buildings are here! Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down." Later in the evening of that day—two days before his crucifixion—he sat upon the Mount of Olives over against the temple, looking once again at these great buildings, and in answer to an inquiry of his disciples, tired though he must have been with all the incidents of a most harassing day, he entered upon that lengthened prophecy in which he told how Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles. And now again, in this last stage of his way to Calvary, the

days that he had spoken of so particularly in that prophecy are once more before his eyes. How shall we explain all this? How was it that the city of Jerusalem had such a hold upon the heart of Jesus Christ? How was it that the joys and the sorrows, the provocations and the sympathies of his latest days, all alike, by some mysterious link of association, called up before his thoughts the terrible calamities which Jerusalem was to endure? Grant all that can be claimed for Jerusalem in the way of preëminence both as to character and destiny over all the cities of this earth; acknowledge the power that the close connection between our Lord's own death and its destruction must have exerted upon his mind; but beside all this, may we not believe that in the human heart of Jesus, as we know that there was room for special affection, individual attachment, so also was there room for the patriotic sentiment, that love of country by which every true man or woman born is characterized? Jesus was a Jew. Judea was the land of his birth. Jerusalem was the chief city of that land. Around its earlier and its later history there gathered all of joyful and of sorrowful interest that could touch a Jewish heart. And it touched the spirit of Jesus to contemplate its downfall. Are we wrong in thinking that with that which was divine, and that which was broadly human, there mingled a Jewish, a patriotic element in the grief which shed tears over its destruction? If love of country form part of a perfect man, shall we not believe that, purified from all imperfections—its narrowness, its exclusiveness, its selfishness—that affection had a place and found a home in the bosom of our Lord?

At such a season as this in the history of our own land we would fain believe so. A common loss, a common grief, a common sympathy, has knit all hearts together, as they have but rarely been united. He can have been no ordinary prince, whose death has caused so general, such universal grief. And she assuredly is no ordinary queen, whose sorrow has been made their own by so many millions of human hearts. There is something cementing, purifying, ennobling, in a whole nation mourning as ours does now. Let us try to consecrate that mourning, and while we give to our beloved Sovereign the entire sympathy of our heart, only wishing that she fully knew\* what a place she holds in the affections of her people, let us lift up our hearts in gratitude to Him who has bestowed on us in her such a priceless treasure, and let us lift up prayers to heaven, that she may have imparted to her that comfort and strength, which,

\* This lecture was delivered on the Sunday succeeding the death of the prince consort, and before full expression of public sympathy had been given.

in such sorrow as hers, the highest and the humblest of earth equally need, and which are bestowed alike on all who ask, and trust, and hope, in and through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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## VIII.

## THE PENITENT THIEF.\*

ONE of the first things done by the Roman soldiers to whom the execution of the sentence was committed, was to strip our Saviour and to nail him to the cross. We do not know whether that cruel operation of transfixing the hands and feet was performed while the cross yet lay upon the ground, or after it was erected. They offered him—in kindness let us believe rather than in scorn, wine mingled with myrrh, an anodyne or soothing draught, fitted to dull or deaden the sense of pain, but he waved it away; he would do nothing that might lull the senses, but might at the same time impair the full, clear, mental consciousness. The clothing of the criminal was in all such instances a legal perquisite of the executioners, and the soldiers proceeded to divide it among them. The other parts of his outer raiment they found it comparatively easy to divide; but when they came to his inner coat, finding it of somewhat unusual texture, woven from the top throughout—it may have been his mother's workmanship, or the gift of some of those kind women who had ministered to his wants and comforts—they found no way of disposing of it so easy as to cast lots among them whose it should be, fulfilling thus, but all unconsciously, that Scripture, which, apart from this manner of disposal of the clothing, we might not well have understood how it could be verified—"They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots."

Pilate's last act that morning, after he had given up Jesus to be crucified, was to have the ground of his sentence declared in a writing which he directed should be placed conspicuously upon the cross above his head. To secure that this writing should be seen and read of all men, Pilate further ordered that it should be written in Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, the three chief languages of the time. All the four evangelists record what this writing or superscription was, yet in each the words of which it was composed are differently reported. No two of them agree as to the precise terms

\* Matt. 27 : 35-37 ; John 19 : 20-22 ; Luke 23 : 23-43.



of the title, though all of them are perfectly at one as to its meaning and intent. It does not in the least surprise us when four different narrators of some spoken, and it may be lengthened discourse, vary here and there in the exact words imputed to the speaker. It is somewhat different when it is a short written public document, like that placed over the Saviour's head on this occasion, the contents of which are given. Here we might naturally have expected that the very words—*literatim et verbatim*—would have been preserved. And if it be not so, in this case as well as in others equally if not more remarkable, such as that of the few words spoken by the voice from heaven at the time of the Saviour's baptism, and those spoken by our Lord himself at the institution of his own supper—if it be the general sense, and not the exact words which the sacred writers present to us, is there no warning in this against the expectation of finding a minute and literal exactness everywhere in the gospel narrative? no warning against our treating that narrative as if such kind of exactness had been intended, and is to be found therein?

The sight of this title, posted up so prominently above the head of Jesus, annoyed the Jews. The chief priests were especially provoked; nor have we far to go to discover the reason of their provocation. Among the last things Pilate said to them, when he brought out Jesus, had been, "Behold your king!" And among the last things they said to Pilate, in the heat of their exasperation, and the urgency of their desire to have Jesus ordered off to instant crucifixion, was, "Away, away with him! crucify him! *we have no king but Cæsar*"—"this man is not only a false pretender, but he and all others except Cæsar are traitors who make any such pretension." Thus, in that unguarded hour, did they absolutely renounce all desire or hope of having a king of their own. Pilate took them at their word, and put over Christ's head such a title as implied that any one claiming to be king of the Jews might, on that ground alone, whatever his rights and claims—on the ground simply of the allegiance which the Jews owed, and which the chief priests had avowed, to the Roman emperor—be justly condemned to death. When they looked at that legal declaration of his crime placed above Christ's head, and thought of all that it implied, the chief priests hurried back to Pilate, and asked him to make a modification of it, which should leave it open that there might be another king of the Jews besides Cæsar. "Write not," they said to Pilate, "The king of the Jews; but that he said, I am king of the Jews." Let it be made patent, that it was as an illegitimate claimant that he was put to death. In ill humor with himself, in worse humor with them, Pilate is in no mood to listen to

their proposal. He will hold them tightly to their own denial and disavowal of any king but Cæsar; and so, with a somewhat sharp and surly decisiveness, he dismisses them by saying, "What I have written I have written."

Meanwhile, the soldiers have completed their cruel work. It was when in their hands, or soon after, that Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Such rough handling as that to which our Lord had been subjected, such acute bodily suffering as it had inflicted, have a strong tendency to irritate, and to render the sufferer indifferent to everything beyond his own injuries and pains. But how far above this does Jesus rise! No murmuring; no threatening; no accusation; no lament; no cry for help; no invoking of vengeance; no care for, or thought of self; no obtruding of his own forgiveness. It is not, *I forgive you*; but, "Father, forgive them." No sidelong glance even at his own wrongs and sufferings, in stating for what the forgiveness is solicited. "They know not what they do;" in this simple and sublime petition, not the slightest, most shadowy trace of self-consideration. It is from a heart occupied with thought for others, and not with its own woes; it is out of the depths of an infinite love and pity, which no waters can quench, that there comes forth the purest and highest petition for mercy that ever ascended to the Father of mercies in the heavens. It is from the lips of a Brother-Man that this petition comes, yet from One who can speak to God as to his own Father. It is from Jesus on the cross it comes; from him who submits to all the shame and agony of crucifixion, that as the Lamb that once was slain for us, he might earn, as it were, the right thus to pray, and furnish himself with a plea in praying, such as none but he possesseth and can employ. As a prophet, he had spoken to the daughters of Jerusalem by the way; as the great High Priest, he intercedes for his crucifiers from the cross.

Nor are we to confine that intercession to those for whom in the first instance it was exerted. Wide over the whole range of sinful humanity does that prayer of our Redeemer extend. For every sinner of our race, if it be true of him that he knew not what he did, that prayer of Jesus goes up to the throne of mercy. It was in comparative ignorance that those soldiers and those Jews crucified Jesus. Had they known what they did, we have an apostle's testimony for believing they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But their ignorance did not take away their guilt. Had it done so, there had been no need of an intercessor in their behalf. It was with wicked hands they did that deed. Nor did their ignorance in

any way entitle them to forgiveness; then might it have been left to the Father to deal with them without any intercession of the Son. But their ignorance brought them and their doings within the pale of that divine mercy for which the prayer of the great Mediator was presented. How far we are entitled to carry this idea, I shall not presume to say. Was it because of that element—the element of an imperfect knowledge of what was done—that for the transgression of man a Saviour and a sacrifice were provided—not provided for the sin of fallen angels, of whom it could not, in the same sense, be said that they knew not what they did?—Is it to that degree in which a partial ignorance of what we do, prevails—that ignorance not being of itself entirely our own fault—that our transgression comes within the scope and power of the intercession of the Redeemer? To questions such as these we venture no reply. Only let us remember that sins rise in magnitude as they are committed against light, and that the clearer and fuller that light is, and the greater and more determined and obstinate our resistance to it, the nearer we approach to that condition which the apostle had in his eye when he wrote these words of warning: “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame; for if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.”

Their cruel work completed, the soldiers sit down before the cross to watch. Behind them the people stand beholding. There is a momentary stillness. It is broken by some passers-by—for the cross was raised near some public thoroughfare—who, stopping for a moment as they pass, look up, and wag their heads at Jesus, saying contemptuously to him, “Ah! thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself! If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.” That ribald speech strikes the key-note for other like fiendish taunts and gibes. The chief priests, the scribes, the elders—their dignity forgotten—hasten to join the mockery; to deaden perhaps some unwelcome voices rising within their hearts. They do not act, however, like the honest common people, who in their passing by look up at or speak directly to Jesus—they do not, they dare not. They stand repeating, as Mark

tells us, *among themselves*; saying *of* him, not *to* him, 'He saved others, himself he cannot save; let him save himself if he be Christ, the chosen of God. If he be the king of Israel, let him come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God,' (strange that they should thus blasphemously use the very words of the twenty-second Psalm,) 'let him deliver him now if he will have him, for he said, I am the Son of God.' The Roman soldiers get excited by the talk they hear going on around. They rise, and they offer him some vinegar to drink, repeating one of the current taunts, till at last one of the malefactors, hanging on the cross beside him, does the same.

Strange, certainly, that among those who rail at Jesus at such a time, one of those crucified along with him should be numbered. Those brought out to share together the shame and agony of a public execution, have generally looked on each other with a kindly and indulgent eye. Outcasts from the world's sympathy, they have drawn largely upon the sympathy of one another. Since they were to die thus together, they have desired to die at peace. Many an old, deep grudge has been buried at the gallows-foot. But here, where there is nothing to be mutually forgotten, nothing to be forgiven, nothing whatever to check the operation of that common law by which community in suffering begets sympathy; here, instead of sympathy, there is scorn; instead of pity, reproach. What called forth such feelings, at such a time, and from such a quarter? In part it may have been due to the circumstance that it was upon Jesus that the main burden of the public reproach was flung. Bad men like to join with others in blaming those who either are, or are supposed to be, worse men than themselves. And so it may have brought something like relief, may even have ministered something like gratification to this man to find that when brought out for execution, the tide of public indignation directed itself so exclusively against Jesus—by making so much more of whose criminality, he thinks to make so much less of his own. Or is it the spirit of the religious scoffer that vents here its expiring breath? All he sees, and all he hears—those pouting lips, those wagging heads, those upbraiding speeches—tell him what it was in Jesus that had kindled such enmity against him, and too thoroughly does he share in that spirit which is rife around the cross, not to join in the expression of it, and so while others are railing at Jesus, he too will rail. It is difficult to give any more satisfactory explanation of his conduct, difficult in any case like this to fathom the depths even of a single human spirit; but explain it as you may, it was one drop



added to the cup of bitterness which our Lord on that day took into his hands, and drunk to the very dregs, that not only were his enemies permitted to do with him what they would, but the very criminal who is crucified by his side deems himself entitled to cast such reproachful sayings in his teeth.

But he is not suffered to rail at Jesus unrebuked, and the rebuke comes most appropriately from his brother malefactor, who turning upon him, says, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?"—"Dost not thou fear God?" he does not need to say, Dost thou not fear man? for man has already done all that man can do. But, "Dost not thou fear God?" He knows then that there is a God to fear, a God before whose bar he and his brother sufferers are soon to appear; a God to whom they shall have to give account, not only for every evil action that in their past lives they have done, but for every idle word that in dying they shall speak. He knows it now, he feels it now—had he known and felt it sooner, it might have saved him from hanging on that cross—that over and above the condemnation of man which he had so lightly thought of, and so fearlessly had braved, there is another and weightier condemnation, even that of the great God, into whose hands, as a God of judgment, it is a fearful thing for the impenitent to fall.

"And we indeed justly." No questioning of the proof, no quarrelling with the law, no reproaching of the judge. He neither thinks that his crime was less heinous than the law made it, nor his punishment greater than the crime deserved. Nor do you hear from this man's lips what you so often hear from men placed in like circumstances, the complaint that he had been taken, and he must die, while so many others, greater criminals than himself, are suffered to go at large unpunished. At once and unreservedly he acknowledges the justice of the sentence, and in so doing, shows a spirit penetrated with a sense of guilt. And not only is he thoroughly convinced of his own guilt, he is as thoroughly convinced of Christ's innocence. "We indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss." Little as he may have seen or known before of Jesus, what he had witnessed had entirely convinced him that His was a case of unmerited and unprovoked persecution; that he was an innocent man whom these Jews, to gratify their own spleen, to avenge themselves in their own ignoble quarrel with him, were hounding to the death.

But he goes much farther than to give expression merely to his conviction of Christ's innocence—and it is here we touch upon the spiritual marvels of this extraordinary incident. Turning from speak-

ing to his brother malefactor, fixing his eye upon, and addressing himself to Jesus, as he hangs upon the neighboring cross, he says, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." How came he, at such a time and in such circumstances, to call Jesus Lord? how came he to believe in the coming of his kingdom? It is going the utmost length to which supposition can be carried, to imagine that he had never met with Jesus till he had met him that morning to be led out in company with him to Calvary. He saw the daughters of Jerusalem weeping by the way; he heard those words of Jesus which told of the speaker's having power to withdraw the veil which hides the future; he had seen and read the title nailed above the Saviour's head, proclaiming him to be the King of the Jews; from the lips of the passers-by, of the chief priests, the elders, the soldiers, he had gathered that this Jesus, now dying by his side, had saved others from that very death he is himself about to die, had professed a supreme trust in God, had claimed to be the Christ, the Chosen, the Son of God: and he had seen and heard enough to satisfy him that all which Jesus had claimed to be he truly was. Such were some of the materials put by Divine Providence into this man's hands whereon to build his faith; such the broken fragments of the truth loosely scattered in his way. He takes them up, collects, combines; the enlightening Spirit shines upon the evidence thus afforded, shines in upon his quickened soul; and there brightly dawns upon his spirit the sublime belief that in that strange sufferer by his side he sees the long-promised Messiah, the Saviour of mankind, the Son and equal of the Father, who now, at the very time that his mind has opened to a sense of his great iniquity, and he stands trembling on the brink of eternity, reveals himself as so near at hand, so easy of access. His faith, thus quickly formed, goes forth into instant exercise, and, turning to Jesus, he breathes into his convenient ear the simple but ardent prayer, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

The hostile multitude around are looking forward to Christ's approaching death, as to that decisive event which shall at once, and for ever, scatter to the winds all the idle rumors that have been rife about him; all his vain pretensions to the Messiahship. The faith of Christ's own immediate followers is ready to give way before that same event; they bury it in his grave, and have only to say of him afterwards, "We hoped that it had been he that should have redeemed Israel." Yet here, amid the triumph of enemies, and the failure of the faith of friends, is one who, conquering all the difficulties that sense opposes to its recognition, discerns, even through the dark en-

velope which covers it, the hidden glory of the Redeemer, and openly hails him as his Lord and King. Marvellous, indeed, the faith in our Lord's divinity which sprung up so suddenly in such an unlikely region; which shone out so brightly in the very midnight of the world's unbelief. Are we wrong in saying that, at the particular moment when that testimony to Christ's divinity was borne, there was not another full believer in that divinity but this dying thief? If so, was it not a fitting thing, that He who was never to be left without a witness, now when there was but one witness left, should have had this solitary testimony given to his divinity at the very time when it was passing into almost total eclipse; so nearly wholly shrouded from mortal vision? There were many to call him Lord when he rose triumphant from the tomb; there is but one to call him Lord as he hangs dying on the cross.

But let us look upon the prayer of the dying thief not only as a public testimony to the kingly character and prerogative of Jesus, but as the prayer of individual, appropriating faith; the earnest, hopeful, trustful application of a dying sinner to a dying Saviour. His idea of Christ's character and office may have been obscure; the nature of that kingdom into possession of which he was about to enter, he may have but imperfectly understood. He knew it, however, to be a spiritual kingdom; he felt that individually he had forfeited his right of admission to its privileges and its joys; he believed that it lay with Jesus to admit him into that kingdom. Not with a spirit void of apprehension, may he have made his last appeal. It may have seemed to him a very doubtful thing, whether, when relieved from the sharp pains of crucifixion, the suffering over, and the throne of the kingdom reached, Jesus would think of him amid the splendors and the joys of his new kingly state. Doubts of a kindred character have often haunted the hearts of the penitent, the hearts of the best and the holiest; but there were two things of which he had no doubt: that Jesus could save him if He would, and that if He did not he should perish. And it is out of these two simple elements that genuine faith is always formed, a deep, pervading, subduing consciousness of our own unworthiness, a simple and entire trust in Christ.

It has been often and well said, that while this one instance of faith in Jesus formed at the eleventh hour is recorded in the New Testament, in order that none, even to the last moment of their being, should despair—there is but this one instance, that none may presume upon a death-bed repentance. And even this instance teaches most impressively that the faith which justifies always sanctifies;

that the faith which brings forgiveness and opens the gates of paradise to the dying sinner carries with it a renovating power; that the faith which conveys the title, works at the same time the meetness for the heavenly inheritance. Let a man die that hour in which he truly and cordially believes, that hour his passage into the heavenly kingdom is made secure; but let a window be opened that hour into his soul, let us see into all the secrets thereof, and we shall discover that morally and spiritually there has been a change in inward character corresponding to the change in legal standing or relationship with God. It was so with this dying thief. True, we have but a short period of his life before us, and in that period only two short sayings to go upon; happily, however, sayings of such a kind, and spoken in such circumstances, as to preclude all doubt of their entire honesty and truthfulness; and what do they reveal of the condition of that man's mind and heart? What tenderness of conscience is here; what deep reverence for God; what devout submission to the divine will; what entire relinquishment of all personal grounds of confidence before God; what a vivid realizing of the world of spirits; what a humble trust in Jesus; what a zeal for the Saviour's honor; what an indignation at the unworthy treatment he was receiving! May we not take that catalogue of the fruits of genuine repentance which an apostle has drawn up for us, and applying it here, say of this man's repentance, Behold what carefulness it wrought in him; yea, what clearing of himself; yea, what indignation; yea, what fear; yea, what vehement desire; yea, what zeal; yea, what revenge! In all things he proved himself to be a changed man, in the desires and dispositions and purposes of his heart. The belief has been expressed, that in all the earth there was not at that moment such a believer in the Lord's divinity as he; would it be going too far to suggest, that in all the earth, at that moment, there was not another man inwardly riper and readier for entrance into paradise?

"Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Loud and angry voices have for hours been ringing in the vexed ear of Jesus, voices whose blasphemy and inhumanity wounded him far more than the mere personal antipathy they breathed. Amid these harsh and grating sounds, how new, how welcome, how grateful, this soft and gentle utterance of desire, and trust, and love! It dropped like a cordial upon the fainting spirit of our Lord, the only balm that earth gave forth to lay upon his wounded spirit. Let us, too, be grateful for that one soothing word addressed to the dying Jesus, and wherever the gospel is declared let the words which that man spake be repeated in memorial of him.



“Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” He will not ask to be remembered *now*; he will not break in upon this season of his Lord’s bitter anguish. He only asks that, when the sharp pains of his passion shall be over, the passage made, and the throne of the kingdom won, Jesus will, in his great mercy, *then* think of him. Jesus will let him know that he does not need to wait so long; he will let him know that the Son of man hath power, even on earth, to forgive sin; that the hour never cometh when his ear is so heavy that it cannot hear, his hand so shortened that it cannot save; and the prayer has scarce been offered when the answer comes, “Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

The lips may have trembled that spake these words; soft and low may have been the tone in which they were uttered; but they were words of power, words which only one Being who ever wore human form could have spoken. His divinity is acknowledged: the moment it is so, it breaks forth into bright and beautiful manifestation. The hidden glory bursts through the dark cloud that veiled it, and, in all his omnipotence to save, Jesus stands revealed. What a rebuke to his crucifiers! They may strip his mortal body of its outward raiment, which these soldiers may divide among them as they please; his human soul they may strip of its outer garment of the flesh, and send it forth unclothed into the world of spirits. But his kingly right to dispense the royal gift of pardon, his power to save, can they strip him of that? Nay, little as they know it, they are helping to clothe him with that power, at the very time when they think they are laying all his kingly pretensions in the dust. He will not do what they had so often in derision asked him that day to do; he will not come down from the cross; he will not give that proof of his divinity; he will not put forth his almighty power by exerting it upon the world of matter. But on this very cross he will give a higher proof of his divinity; he will exert that power, not over the world of matter, but over the world of spirits, by stretching forth his hand and delivering a soul from death, and carrying it with him that day into paradise.

“Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” Jesus would not rise from the sepulchre alone; he would have others rise along with him. And so, even as he dies, the earthquake does its allotted work, work so strange for an earthquake to do—it opens not a new grave for the living, it opens the old graves of the dead; and as the third morning dawns, from the opened graves the bodies of the saints arise with the rising body of the Lord—types and pledges of the general resurrection of the dead verifying,

by their appearance in the holy city, the words of ancient prophecy : "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust ; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out her dead." And as Jesus would not rise from the sepulchre alone, so neither will he enter paradise alone. He will carry one companion spirit with him to the place of the blessed ; thus early giving proof of his having died upon that cross that others through his death might live, and live for ever. See, then, in the ransomed spirit borne that day to paradise, the primal trophy of the power of the uplifted cross of Jesus ! What saved this penitent thief ? No water of baptism was ever sprinkled upon him ; at no table of communion did he ever sit ; of the virtue said to lie in sacramental rites he knew nothing. It was a simple believing look of a dying sinner upon a dying Saviour that did it. And that sight has lost nothing of its power. Too many, alas ! have passed, are still passing by that spectacle of Jesus upon the cross ; going, one to his farm, another to his merchandise, and not suffering it to make its due impression on their hearts ; but thousands upon thousands of the human race—we bless God for this—have gazed upon it with a look kindred to that of the dying thief, and have felt it exert upon them a kindred power. Around it, once more, let me ask you all to gather. Many here, I trust, as they look at it, can say, with adoring gratitude, He loved *me* ; he gave himself for me ; he was wounded for my transgression, he was bruised for mine iniquity ; he is all my salvation, he is all my desire. Some may not be able to go so far ; yet there is one step that all of us, who are in any degree alive to our obligations to redeeming love, can take—one prayer that we all may offer ; and surely, if that petition got so ready audience when addressed to Jesus in the midst of his dying agonies, with certain hope of not less favorable audience may we take it up, and shaping it to meet our case, may say, Now that thou hast gone into thy kingdom, O Lord, remember me.

Yet once more let the words of our Lord be repeated, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." But where this paradise ? what this paradise ? We can say, in answer to these questions, that with this heavenly paradise into which the redeemed at death do enter, the ancient, the earthly paradise is not fit to be compared. In the one, the direct intercourse with God was but occasional ; in the other it shall be constant. In the one, the Deity was known only as he revealed himself in the works of creation and in the ways of his providence ; in the other, it will be as the God of our redemption, the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus, that he will be rec-

ognized, adored, obeyed—all the higher moral attributes of his nature shining forth in harmonious and illustrious display. Into the earthly paradise the tempter entered; from the heavenly he will be shut out. From the earthly paradise sad exiles once were driven; from the heavenly we shall go no more out for ever. Still, however, after all such imperfect and unsatisfying comparisons, the questions return upon us, Where, and what is this paradise of the redeemed? Our simplest and our best answers to those questions perhaps are these: Where is paradise? wherever Jesus is. What is paradise? to be for ever with, and to be fully like our Lord. We know—for God has told us so, of that paradise of the redeemed—that it is a land of perfect light; the day has dawned there; the shadows have for ever fled away. It is a land of perfect blessedness; no tears fall there; no sighs rise there; up to the measure of its capacity, each spirit filled with a pure, never-ending joy. It is a land of perfect holiness; nothing that defileth shall enter there; neither whatsoever loveth or maketh a lie. But what gives to that land its light, its joy, its holiness in the sight of the redeemed? it is the presence of Jesus. If there be no night there, it is because the Lamb is the light of that place. If there be no tears there, it is because from every eye his hand has wiped off every tear. The holiness that reigneth there is a holiness caught from the seeing him as he is. And trace the tide of joy that circulates through the hosts of the blessed to its fountain-head, you will find it within that throne on which the Lamb that once was slain is sitting. To be with Jesus, to be like Jesus, to love and serve him purely, deeply, unfailingly, unfalteringly—that is the Christian's heaven.

“I love,” says one, “to think of heaven;” and as I repeat the words, they will find an echo in each Christian heart:

“I love to think of heaven; its cloudless light,  
 Its tearless joys, its recognitions, and its fellowships  
 Of love and joy unending; but when my mind anticipates  
 The sight of God incarnate, wearing on his hands  
 And feet and side marks of the wounds  
 Which he for me on Calvary endured,  
 All heaven beside is swallowed up in this;  
 And he who was my hope of heaven below  
 Becomes the glory of my heaven above.”

Yet once again let the memorable words of our Lord be repeated, “To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” What a day to that dying man! How strange the contrast between its opening and its close, its morning and its night! Its morning saw him a culprit condemned before the bar of earthly judgment; before evening shad-

owed the hill of Zion, he stood accepted at the bar of heaven. The morning saw him led out through an earthly city's gates in company with one who was hooted at by the crowd that gathered round him; before night fell upon Jerusalem, the gates of another city, even the heavenly, were lifted up, and he went up through them in company with one around whom all the hosts of heaven were bowing down, as he passed on to take his place beside the Father on his everlasting throne. Humblest believer in the Saviour, a like marvellous contrast is in store for you. This hour, it may be, weak and burdened, tossing on the bed of agony, in that darkened chamber of stifled sobs and drooping tears; the next hour, up and away in the paradise of God, mingling with the spirits of the just made perfect, renewing death-broken friendships, gazing on the unveiled glories of the Lamb. Be thou then but faithful unto death; struggle on for a few more of those numbered days, or months, or years, and on that day of your departure hence, in his name I have to say it to you, Verily, thou too shalt be with him in paradise.

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IX.

THE MOTHER OF OUR LORD.\*

THE last sight we got of the disciple whom Jesus loved was when he and Peter entered together into the hall of the high priest. Silent and in the shade, he escaped the scrutiny that his rash companion drew upon himself. Of the sad scene that ensued, John was the sorrowful witness. He saw the Lord turn and look upon Peter; he saw Peter turn and leave the hall. It is not likely that he followed him. A stronger attraction kept him where he was. He waited to see what the issue of these strange proceedings should be; waited till he heard the judgment of the Sanhedrim given; waited till he saw the weak and sorely-badgered governor at last give way; waited perhaps till the preparations for the crucifixion had commenced. Then may he have gone in haste into the city; gone to seek out those who, he knew, would be most interested to hear; especially to seek out and to comfort her upon whose wounded heart the burden of these terrible tidings would fall most heavily. Most likely it was from the lips of the beloved disciple that Mary first heard that morning of the fate which awaited Jesus. But where and when did she first see him?

\* John 19:25-27.



Not in the palace of the high priest; not in the judgment-hall of Pilate. Although she had got the tidings soon enough to be there, these were not places for such a visitant. Nor was she one of those daughters of Jerusalem that lamented and bewailed him by the way. The first sight she gets of him is when, mocked by the soldiers, derided by the passers-by, insulted by the chief priests, he hangs upon the cross. She has her own sister Mary with her, and that other faithful Mary of Magdala, with John beside them, making up that little group, who, with feelings so different from those of all the others, gaze upon the scene.

The prayer for his crucifiers has been offered. The penitent thief has heard the declaration that opens to him that day the gates of paradise, when the eye of the Crucified, wandering over the motley crowd, fixes upon that little group standing, quietly but sadly, near enough to be spoken to. John is addressing some word, or doing some act of kindness to Mary. They are at least so close to one another, that though Jesus names neither, neither can mistake of whom and to whom he speaks, as, bending a tender look upon them, he says, "Woman, behold thy son!" "Son, behold thy mother!" John acts at once on the direction given, and withdraws Mary from the spot, and takes her to his own home in Jerusalem. Amid the dark and tumultuous, solemn and awful incidents of the crucifixion, this incident has so much of peaceful repose that we feel tempted to dwell upon it. At once, and very naturally, it suggests to us a review of the previous relationship and intercourse between Mary and her mysterious Son. We cannot, indeed, rightly appreciate our Lord's notice of her from the cross without taking it in connection with that relationship and intercourse.

The angelic annunciation, the salutation of Elisabeth, the visits of the Bethlehem shepherds and the Eastern magi, had all prepared Mary to see, in her first-born Son, One greater than the children of men. All those sayings—about his greatness and glory, his being called the Son of the Highest, his sitting upon the throne of David his father, his reigning over the house of Jacob for ever—she kept and pondered in her heart, wondering exceedingly what manner of man that child of hers should be, in whom those sayings should be fulfilled. As she listened to all those prophecies of his future greatness, by which his birth was foretold and celebrated, what bright and glowing anticipations must have filled Mary's heart! One discordant word alone at this time fell upon her ear, one saying differing from all the rest, the meaning of which she could not understand. "This child," said the aged Simeon, as he took up the babe into his

arms at his presentation within the temple—"this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be spoken against." "Yea," added the aged prophet, as he looked sadly and sympathizingly at Mary, "a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also." Was it to temper her new-born joy; was it to teach her to mingle some apprehension with her hopes; was it to prepare and fortify her for the actual future that lay before her—so different from the imagined one—that these words were spoken? Beyond exciting a fresh wonder and perplexity, they could, however, have had but little effect on Mary at the time. She did not, she could not understand them then; therefore, with those bright and joyous anticipations still within her heart, she retired to Nazareth. The child grew, the evangelist tells us, waxed strong in spirit, was filled with wisdom, the grace of God was upon him; but beyond that gentleness which nothing could ruffle, that meekness which nothing could provoke, that wisdom which was daily deepening and widening, giving ever new and more wonderful, yet ever natural and child-like exhibitions of itself, that dutiful submission to his reputed parents, that love to all around him upon earth, that deeper love to his Father in heaven—beyond that rare and unexampled assemblage of all the virtues and graces by which a human childhood could be adorned, there was nothing outwardly to distinguish him from any child of his own age, nothing outwardly to mark him out as the heir of such a glorious destiny.

Twelve years of that childhood pass. Jesus has been to Mary so like what any other son might have been to his mother, that, unconscious of any difference, she assumes and exercises over him all ordinary maternal rights. But now, again, just as it was with that speech of Simeon among the other prophecies that heralded the Redeemer's birth, so is it with an act and speech of Christ himself among the quiet incidents out of which, for thirty years, his life at Nazareth was made up. When twelve years old, they take Jesus up to Jerusalem, the days of the festival are fulfilled, the village company to which Jesus and his family were attached, leave the holy city on their return. Joseph and Mary never for a moment doubt that, acting with his accustomed wisdom and dutifulness, their son will be with the other youths from Nazareth and its neighborhood, along with whom he had made the journey up to the holy city. Not till the usual resting-place for the night is reached do they miss him. Something must have happened to hinder him from joining the company at Jerusalem. Full of anxiety, Joseph and Mary return into the city. Three days are spent in the sorrowful search. At last they find him,

sitting quietly among the doctors, as if the temple were his home. Imagine Mary's feelings at this sight. No accident, then, had happened to him; no restraint had been laid upon him. It had been voluntarily and deliberately that her son had remained thus behind for four days after her departure. Never before had Jesus acted in such a way, never said or done anything fitted to give her pain. Never before had she occasion to reproach or rebuke him; but now, in her surprise and grief, she cannot help speaking to him as she had never done before. "Son," said she, when at last she found him—"Son, why hast thou dealt thus with us? Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." Now mark the Son's reply when spoken to as if he had been forgetful of the duty that a child owes to his parents. Mary had called him Son; he does not call her mother; he never does—never in any conversation related in the gospels. Mary had spoken of Joseph as his father; he nowise recognizes that relationship. The full consciousness of another, higher Sonship than that to Mary has entered his youthful heart; and, under the inspiration of this consciousness, his only reply to the maternal appeal is, "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"—a very strange and altogether unexpected answer; one which, we are distinctly told, neither Mary nor Joseph understood. It offered no explanation or excuse for his conduct. It denied all need for any such explanation or excuse. In the matter of his heavenly Father's business, it repudiated their interference. Mary had never heard her own or Joseph's authority over him questioned by Jesus. Had this visit to Jerusalem weakened in his heart the sense of subjection to them? Was he going to throw it off? Will he refuse to accompany them? Must he still continue to be thus engaged about his Father's business? No! Having said thus much, to teach them that he knew how special his earthly relationship to them was, he rose, he left the temple, and returning with them to Nazareth, was subject to them as before, yet not without having deposited another seed of wonder in Mary's heart—wonder as to what that other Father's business was, with her son's mode of doing which she, as his mother, must not interfere.

Jesus is, as before, Mary's dutiful and submissive son. Joseph dies, and he, who had been sharer of his reputed father's earthly labors, becomes perhaps the chief support and solace of his mother in her widowhood. Eighteen years go past. Jesus leaves his home at Nazareth, alone, for none of his own family believe in him. He presents himself on the banks of the Jordan, and asks baptism at the hands of John. The sign from heaven is given; the voice from



heaven is heard; the Baptist points to him as the Lamb of God. Philip hails him as the Messiah promised to the fathers. Nathanael recognises him as the Son of God, the King of Israel. All this is told to Mary. A few weeks later her son returns, and finds her at the marriage-feast at Cana; returns now with the public vouchers of his Messiahship, and with five followers, who acknowledge him as their Master. Once more, as at his birth, the hopes of Mary's heart rise high. It is at the house of a friend—of a near relative, it has been conjectured—that this marriage-feast is held. The guests, swelled by Christ's disciples, are more numerous than had been anticipated. The wine provided fails. If her son be indeed that great prophet who is to appear, might he not take this public opportunity of partially, at least, revealing himself? Might he not interfere to shield the family from discredit? Might he not, with the wine that still remained, do something like to what Elijah had done with the cruse of oil and the barrel of meal? Filled with such hopes, she calls his attention to the deficiency, trusting that he may possibly, in his new character and office, remove it. "She saith to him, They have no wine. Jesus saith to her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? [or, what hast thou to do with me?] mine hour is not yet come." Soften it as we may, relieve it from all that may seem disrespectful, there was discouragement and reproof in this reply. Presuming upon her motherly relationship, on the privileges that her thirty years of maternal control have given her, Mary ventures to suggest, and she does it in the most delicate manner, what his course of action might be, now that he enters upon the public walk of the great Prophet. Upon all such interference on her part, an instant, gentle, but firm check must be imposed. Mary must be taught the limits of that influence and authority which her earthly relationship to him had hitherto permitted her to exercise. She must be taught that in the new and higher path upon which he was now about to enter, that motherly relationship gave her no place nor right to direct or to control.

Mary felt and acted upon the reproof. She never afterwards, at least that we know of, in any way obtruded herself. In the history of our Lord's three years' ministry, she never once appears in direct intercourse with her son. She may sometimes have been with him in his many circuits of Galilee, but you will search in vain for her name among the women who accompanied him, and who ministered to him. Between the words spoken to her at Cana, and those addressed to her from the cross, not another word, addressed by Jesus to his mother, is recorded in the gospels. — True, indeed, he



speaks of her; and in such instances what was said seems to have been intended to moderate in the minds of his hearers their estimate of her position, as his mother. From the outskirts of a crowd that had gathered round him as he taught, the message was once sent in to him, "Behold, thy mother and thy brothers stand without, desiring to speak with thee." What they wanted with him, we do not know: it was on no friendly errand that his brothers came; they disliked his public preaching on the hillsides to the multitude; they thought him beside himself. They expected, on this occasion, that so soon as he got their message, he would give up the work in which he was engaged, and come to them—that he would feel that his mother and they had a claim upon his attention, superior to that of the motley company that was pressing in upon him. It was a case in many respects like that in the temple, of a competition between two kinds or classes of obligations. Very striking was the way in which Jesus in this instance acted. As soon as he heard the message, he exclaimed, "Who is my mother or my brethren?" Then, looking around, he stretches forth his hands to his disciples, (and it is but rarely that any gesture of our Lord is chronicled in the gospel story,) and said, "Behold my mother and my brethren; for whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Another time, as he was speaking with great power and effect, one of his hearers, struck with admiration, broke forth with the exclamation, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps that gave thee suck!" "Yea," said Jesus, checking instantly and emphatically that spirit which had prompted the exclamation—"yea, rather blessed is he that heareth the word of God, and doeth it."

Mary was highly favored. With Gabriel and with all generations of our race, we are prepared to call her blessed. We are prepared to render all due honor to that relationship in which she stood to the Redeemer of mankind. Among all the earthly distinctions and dignities that could have been bestowed upon a woman, the very greatest, we believe, was that which was thus conferred on Mary. And to the reverential regard which this relationship demands, we are prepared to add the still higher regard due to her genuine modesty, her simple faith. Nor are we sure but that, in the depth of our recoil from the superstitious reverence that has gathered round her name, we have overlooked and failed to do full justice to the simplicity, the beauty, the retiringness of that piety which makes her among the pious women of the gospels what John was among the apostles of our Lord.~ But when asked to worship her,

to pray to her as the mother of the Lord, to entreat that she will exert her influence with her Divine Son, is it possible to overlook that treatment which she met with at our Lord's own hands when here upon earth; is it possible to put away from us the thought that, in that very treatment, he was prophetically uttering his own solemn protest against any such idolatrous magnifying of the position and relationship in which it pleased God that she should stand to him? We say this in the spirit of no mere ecclesiastical quarrel with the worship of the virgin. We know how soon paganism mingled its superstitions with the simple worship of the Crucified; and we can well, therefore, understand how, in virtue of all the gentle and sacred associations that linked themselves with her name, her character, her peculiar connection with Jesus, Mary should have come to be regarded with an idolatrous regard. Nay, further, looking back upon those dark ages when, under the grinding tread of Northern barbarism, the civilization of Southern Europe was well-nigh obliterated, we can see a beauty, a tenderness, a power in the worship of Mary; in the prayers and the hymns addressed to her, which turned them into a softening and civilizing element. Nay, further still, were we asked, among all the idolatries that have prevailed upon this idol-loving, idol-worshipping world of ours, to say which one of them it was that touched the finest chords of the human heart, awoke the purest and tenderest emotions, had the best and most humanizing effect, we do not know but that we should fix upon this worship of the virgin. But delivered, as we have been, from the bondage of the middle-age superstitions; with that narrative in our hands which tells us how our Lord himself dealt with Mary; standing as we do, or ought to do, in the full light of that great truth, that "there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus"—it cannot but be matter of surprise, that this worship of the virgin should still prevail in so many of the enlightened countries of Christendom; suggesting the reflection, how slowly it is that the human spirit emancipates itself from any natural, long-continued, and fondly cherished superstition.

Keeping now the whole history of Mary's previous connection with our Lord before our eye, and especially their intercourse during the three years of his public ministry, let us dwell for a moment or two upon Christ's recognition of her from the cross. This affectionate recognition in his dying agonies, must have been peculiarly grateful to Mary. His departure from Nazareth, to which he seems to have paid only one short visit afterwards; his separation from the members of his own family; his engrossment with the great

objects of his public life; the checks he had imposed upon her interference; the manner in which he had publicly spoken of her; all these must have created something like a feeling of estrangement in Mary's breast, as if he had ceased to be to her all that he once was. How pleasing to her then to learn from that look and speech of kindness, that his love for her remained unchanged. How soothing to her motherly affection to receive this last, this parting token of his undying affection for her! She may banish all her fears, bury all her suspicions; that Son of hers, he loves her still, loves her as he had ever done; he cannot die without assuring her of that love. But it is more than a simple expression of affection that comes here from the Redeemer's lips. There is a thoughtful care for Mary's future earthly comfort, the securing for her the attention of another son, the providing for her the shelter of a new home. The dying Jesus has presented to his thoughts the bereaved, the desolate condition in which his death will leave his mother; he will make all the provision he can towards alleviating her distress; silver and gold he has none to give her, but he has what silver and gold could never buy—a hold and power over the heart of one who, if he be well described as the disciple whom Jesus loved, might almost as aptly be described as the disciple who loved Jesus. That hold he will now exercise on her behalf. "Woman, behold thy son!" Woman, not mother: he might, upon this occasion, have restrained himself from calling her so, lest the very mention of her relationship to him should mark her out to that unfriendly crowd, and expose her to their ill-treatment. He is but repeating, however, on the cross, the address of the marriage-feast—"Woman, behold thy son!" Mary, perhaps up to that moment, had cherished some hope of his deliverance; but at that word this hope gives way; she is to lose him; he is to be her son no more; that tie is to be broken, and a new one created in its stead. A better, kinder son than John, Jesus could not have provided; but, alas! Mary feels that he can never fill that Son's place; still there is great kindness in selecting such a substitute.

To John, no name, no epithet is applied; Jesus simply looks at him, and says, "*Behold thy mother!*" John had already been kind to Mary, was at that moment doing what he could to comfort her, would have cared for her, though no special charge of this kind had been given; but a son's place, that son's place, he could not have felt warranted to assume. Now, however, when Jesus with his dying breath calls upon him to occupy it, he counts it as a high honor conferred upon him. He undertakes the trust, and proceeds to execute

it in the promptest and most delicate way. Was he but interpreting aright the look that Jesus gave him, or was he only obeying an impulse of thoughtful, son-like affection in his own breast? However it was, he saw that Mary's strength was failing, that she was unfit for the closing scene; he instantly led her away to his own home in the city. She was not at the cross when the darkness descended; she was not there when the last and bitterest agonies were borne. You search for her in vain among the women who stood afar off beholding to the last. By John's kind act of instant withdrawal, she was saved what she might not have had strength to bear; and though that withdrawal was neither prescribed nor suggested by our Lord himself, one can well imagine with what a grateful look he would follow that son as he discharged this the first office of his new relationship; how pleased he too would be that a mother's heart was spared the pangs of witnessing that suffering which drew from him the cry, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" Mary showed the submissiveness of her disposition in yielding to John's suggestion, and retiring from the cross, and you never see her but once again in the gospel narrative. Neither at the resurrection nor at the ascension, nor during the forty days that intervened between them, is her name mentioned, or does she appear. The one and only glance we get of her is in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where her name and that of our Lord's brother, who had come then to believe on him, are mentioned among the hundred and twenty who, after the ascension, continued in prayer and supplication, waiting for the promise of the Spirit.

And now, in conclusion, in that love which in his latest hours Jesus showed to Mary, let us hail the great and perfect example of filial affection he has left behind him. In that mingling with the broader thoughts of a world's redemption which must then have occupied his thoughts, the thoughtful care for her earthly comfort, let us see the evidence of how essential a part of all true religion it is to provide, as God enables us, for those whom we leave behind us in this world. Let no pretext of other and higher obligations weaken within our breasts the sense of our obligation to discharge this duty before we die.

From our Saviour's treatment of Mary let us learn, too, to put in their right place, to estimate according to their real worth, all earthly, all external distinctions. To be the mother of our Lord, that raised her above all other women, and we gladly join with all who, upon that ground, would call her blessed; yet would we still more wish to join heart and soul in our Lord's own saying, that "more



blessed is he that heareth the word of God, and doeth it." To be the nearest herald, the immediate harbinger of Jesus, that raised John the Baptist above all the prophets, and ranked him among the greatest of the children of men. But yet there is another connection with Christ, higher and still more honorable—a connection in comparison with which the closest of mere external or official bonds sink into absolute insignificance—that inward, that spiritual, that eternal tie which binds the humble, contrite, trustful spirit to the Redeemer. To be the least in his kingdom, to be the least among those who truly love and faithfully obey him, is a more enduring, a more illustrious distinction than to be the highest among those upon whom the honors of this world are heaped. And let us bless God for it, that this, the highest honor to which humanity can be exalted, is one that is within the reach of all. It cometh through humility and faith and love: it cometh through the weight of our sin being felt, the worth of our Redeemer being appreciated. It cometh through our becoming as little children, and yielding ourselves up to those gracious influences of the Divine Spirit, by which alone the proud heart can be humbled, and the doubtful heart be assured, and the unloving heart be brought to love. It cometh through the eye of faith being opened to discern the closeness and the reality of the unseen world, that world of spirits, whose all-engulfing bosom, when a few more of these numbered years of ours on earth are over, shall have received us all. It cometh from our giving to all that concerns our spiritual state, our spiritual welfare and preparation for futurity, that predominance in our regards, our affections, our lives, to which their inherent, their surpassing worth, entitles them. It springs from our caring less for the honor that cometh from man, and more for that honor which cometh from God only.

Finally, let us realize those relationships to one another established in Christ our Lord, which, in their closeness, their blessedness, their enduringness, so far outmeasure all the other relationships of this human life. Why was John selected to take Christ's place, to be a second son to Mary? Why was Mary so specially committed to his charge? She had other sons, upon whom the duty naturally devolved. They, indeed, as yet were unbelievers; and upon that ground might fitly have been excluded. But were there not two of her own sister's sons among the twelve? Why pass the sister and the nephews over, and select John to stand to her in this new relationship? It may have been that John was better placed than they, as to outward circumstances abler to provide a home for the bereaved; but can we doubt that another and still weightier consideration de-

terminated the Saviour's choice—the spiritual affinity between John and Mary; his capacity to enter into all her sorrows; his power by sympathy to support? And ties kindred to those which bound John and Mary together, do they not still bind together those whose hearts have been taught to beat in unison, and who have been formed to be mutual helps and comforts amid the trials and bereavements of life? Thank God for it, if he has given you any such support as Mary and John found in each other; and rejoice in the belief, that those relationships which are grounded on and spring out of our oneness in Jesus Christ, partake not of the mutability of this earthly scene, but, destined to outlive it, are impressed with the seal of eternity.

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## X.

### THE DARKNESS AND THE DESERTION.\*

THE full bright sun of an eastern sky has been looking down on what these men are doing who have nailed Jesus to the cross, and are standing mocking and gibing him. The mid-day hour has come; when suddenly there falls a darkness which swallows up the light, and hangs a funereal pall around the cross: no darkness of an eclipse—that could not be as the moon then stood—no darkness which any natural cause whatever can account for. As we think of it, many questions rise to which no answer can now be given. Did it come slowly on, deepening and deepening till it reached its point of thickest gloom? or was it, as we incline to believe, as instantaneous in its entrance as its exit: at the sixth hour, covering all in a moment with its dark mantle; at the ninth hour, in a moment lifting that mantle off? Was it total or partial: a darkness deep as that of moonless, starless midnight, wrapping the cross so thickly round, that not the man who stood the nearest to it could see aught of the sufferer? Or was it the darkness of a hazy twilight obscuring but not wholly concealing, which left the upraised form of the Redeemer dimly visible through the gloom? Was it local and limited, confined to Jerusalem or Judea; or did it spread over the entire enlightened portion of the globe? We cannot tell. We may say of it, and say truly, that it was inanimate nature, supplying, in her mute elements, that sympathy with her suffering Lord which was denied by man.

\* Mark 15:33, 34.

Men gazed rudely on the sight, but the sun refused to look on it, hiding his face for a season. Men would leave the Crucified, exposed in shame and nakedness, to die; but an unseen hand was stretched forth to draw the drapery of darkness around the sufferer, and hide him from vulgar gaze.

But the truest and deepest significance of this darkness is as a type or emblem of the horror of that great darkness which at this period enveloped the spirit of the Redeemer. The outer incidents, if there were any, of those three hours of darkness, remain untold. We are left only to believe that its sudden descent wrought like a spell upon the actors and spectators; it stopped each wagging head, it silenced each gibing tongue; not a word seems to have been spoken, not a thing done; there they stood, or there they lay, with that spell upon them, wondering what this darkness meant. We can easily enough imagine what *they* may have fancied or felt during that strange period of suspense; but who can imagine what he was thinking, how he, the Saviour, was feeling in that dread and awful interval? No eye perhaps may have pierced the outer darkness that shrouded his suffering body; still less may any human eye penetrate that deeper darkness which shrouded his suffering soul. We are left here without a single external index; not a look, a word, an act, to tell us what was going on within the Redeemer's spirit—till the ninth hour came, the moment which preceded the rolling away of the darkness, and the return of the clear shining of the day, and then the only sound that strikes the ear is the agonizing cry, "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" a cry wrung, as it were, from the sufferer's lips, when the severe agony of the soul has reached its last, its culminating, its closing point; a cry which, revealing somewhat of the interior of the burdened heart from which it springs, leaves still more unrevealed; a cry which, after we have listened to it, and pondered it, and turned it over and over again in our thoughts, seems to grow darker instead of brighter to our eye, and of which we become at last convinced that it was the simple, spontaneous, irrepressible outcry of a spirit tried to the last limit of endurance; the expression of what must for ever remain to us an indescribable, unfathomable, unimaginable woe.

— It would strip, indeed, this cry of the suffering Saviour of all difficulty and mystery, could we look upon him as a man, and nothing more; could we look upon him in dying as subject to the same mental and spiritual, as well as bodily weakness with any of ourselves; could we believe that such doubts and fears as have eclipsed the faith, and darkened for a time the hopes of other dying men, had





THE HOUR OF DARKNESS ON CALVARY.



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place within his breast; could we interpret this saying as the utterance of a momentary despondency, a transient despair. We are disposed to go the utmost length in attributing to the humanity of our Lord all the sinless frailties of our nature; and had we seen him struggling in agony through the tedious death-throes of dissolution, the sinking body drawing the sinking spirit down along with it, and draining it of all its strength—had it been from a spirit enfeebled to the uttermost, its very powers of thought and apprehension, of faith and feeling, fainting, failing, that this sad lament proceeded, we can scarcely tell whether or not it would have been inconsistent with a right estimate of the humanity of Jesus to attribute to him such a momentary oppression under doubt and fear as should have forced this exclamation from his lips, prompted by his obscured perception of his personal relationship with the Father.

It stands, however, in the way of our receiving any such interpretation of this saying, that it came from one whose intellect was so clear and unclouded that the moment after it was uttered he could reflect on all he had to say or do in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, and whose bodily powers were so far from being reduced to the last extremity of weakness, that it was “with a loud voice,” betokening a vigor as yet unexhausted, that he uttered the despairing cry.

Besides, we have only to look back upon the few days that preceded the crucifixion, to find evidence that there mingled with the sufferings which Christ endured upon the cross an element altogether different from the common pains of dying. On one of the last days of his teaching in the temple, certain Greeks desired to see him. Their earnest request sounded to his prophetic ear like the entreaty of the entire Gentile world. It threw him into a sublime reverie of thought. Bright visions of a distant future, when all men should be drawn unto him, rose before his eye; but with them the vision of a future even then at hand—of his being lifted up upon the cross. A sudden change comes over his spirit. He ceases to think of, to speak with man. His eye closes upon the crowd that stand around. He is alone with the Father. A dark cloud wraps his spirit. He fears as he enters it. From the bosom of the darkness there comes an agitated voice: “Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour! but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father glorify thy name!”—some deep, inward trouble of the heart, a shrinking from it, a cry for deliverance, a meek submission to the Divine will. You have all these repeated in order, and with greater intensity in the garden of Gethsemane: “My soul is exceed-

ing sorrowful, even unto death. O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Here, once more, there is the agony, the shrinking, the petition, the acquiescence.

What so troubled Jesus in the temple? what threw him into that bloody sweat in the garden? what drew from him those strong cryings for deliverance? Can any one believe that it was the mere prospect of dying upon a cross which thus shook his spirit to the very centre? To believe so, were to degrade him beneath a level to which multitudes of his followers have risen. Deaths far more formidable, more protracted, more excruciating, they have contemplated beforehand with unruffled composure, and endured with unshrinking fortitude. Shall the disciple be greater than the master? No; there was something more in that hour for which Jesus came into this world, something more in that cup which he took into his trembling hands, than the mere bitterness of apprehended dissolution. He has himself taught us, by the language which he employed, to identify the hour and the cup. He has taught us, too, that this hour was on on him in the temple; this cup was there raised by him to his lips. The same hour was on him in the garden; of the same cup he there drank large and bitter draughts. It was that same hour which came upon him on the cross, to run out its course during the supernatural darkness; it was that same cup which he took once more into his hands, to drain to the very dregs. Here also, as in the temple, in the garden, you have the same features—the conflict, the recoil, the victory. Perhaps the inward trouble and agony of his soul reached a somewhat higher pitch on Calvary than in Gethsemane: that bitter cry, "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" sounds to our ear as coming from a profounder depth of woe than any into which Jesus had ever sunk before; but in source and in character the sorrow of the Saviour's spirit was in each of the three instances the same—a purely mental or spiritual grief, unconnected in two of these cases with any bodily endurance, and, in the third, carefully to be distinguished from those pains of dissolution with which it mingled.

Whence did that grief arise? what were its elements? how came it to be so accumulated and condensed, and to exert such a pressure upon the spirit of our Redeemer, as to force from him those prayers in the garden, this exclamation on the cross? It was because he stood as our great Head and Representative, and suffered in our room and stead: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities;" he "made his soul an offering for sin;" "he died the

just for the unjust, to bring us to God." The testimony of the Scriptures to the vicarious, sacrificial, atoning character of the sufferings and death of Christ, is clear, emphatic, multiform, and unambiguous. But when we go beyond the simple statements of the inspired record, and, admitting the great fact of the atonement, inquire into the how and the wherefore of that fact—resolved to accept implicitly all that the Scriptures teach, but equally resolved not to go beyond its teaching, nor add any theories of our own to its simple and impressive lessons—we feel ourselves on the borders of a region too remote, too mysterious for eyes like ours fully and accurately to survey.

Let us, however, that we may catch a distant sight of one inner fountain of our Redeemer's sufferings, approach it by a path which, for some distance at least, is not obscure. It is said in Scripture that Christ bore our sins in his own body on the tree; it is said, also, that he bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows. Our griefs he bore by sympathy; our sorrows he carried by entering into them and making them his own. That central heart of love and pity opened itself at every point to all the forms and varieties of human woe. Its sympathy stood free from all those restraints that lie upon ours. Our ignorance, our selfishness, our coldness, our incapacity for more than a few intense affections, narrow and weaken the sympathy we feel. But he knows all, can feel for all; so that not a pang of grief wrings any human bosom but sends an answering thrill through the loving, pitying heart of our Divine Redeemer. Human sympathy, too, deepens, takes a peculiar character, a peculiar tenderness, according to the closeness and dearness of the tie which binds us to the sufferer. A mother's fellow-feeling with a suffering child is something very different from what any stranger can experience. And it is not simply as one of us, as a brother man, that Jesus feels for us in our sorrows. It is as one who has linked himself to our race, or rather has linked our race to him by a tie the nature and force of which we are little capable of understanding. — Only we may say, that parent was never bound to child, nor child to parent, in a bond so close as that which binds Jesus Christ and those whom he came to redeem. It would need his own omniscience to fathom the depth and intensity imparted to his sympathy by the peculiarity of that relationship in which it has pleased him to place himself to his own.

Now, Christ's is as much the central conscience as the central heart of humanity. Conceive him entering into a connection with human sin, kindred to that into which he enters with human sorrow, realizing to himself, as he only could, its extent, its inveteracy, its malignity: in this way taking on him all our sins, and letting the full



impression of their inherent turpitude, their ruinous results, fall upon his spirit—who shall calculate for us the bulk and weight of that burden which might thus come to be borne by him? Once, in a Jewish synagogue, he looked round upon a small company of men, and he was grieved because of the hardness of their hearts. Let us imagine that grief amplified and intensified to the uttermost by our Lord's taking upon himself the sin of the world. Let all the hardness of all men's hearts, all the hard speeches that ungodly sinners have spoken, the ungodly deeds they have done; let all the impurity, and injustice, and cruelty, and profanity, and impiety which have been perpetrated under these heavens—of which the enmity and malignity which nailed him to the cross might be taken as a specimen and index; let all that vast accumulation of human iniquity be conceived of as present to the Redeemer's thoughts, appropriated and realized by him as the iniquity of those to whom he had linked himself by a bond of closest fellowship, of undying, unquenchable love; let all the sins of that world he came to save gather in and press down upon the pure and holy and loving spirit of the man Christ Jesus: do we not get a dim and distant sight of a fountain of woe thus opened within, sufficient to send forth waters of bitterness which might well nigh overwhelm his soul, putting his capacity to suffer to an extreme trial?

Further still, may we not imagine that as he made thus the sins of our sinful world his own, and thought and dwelt upon that holiness of God, upon which they were such terrible invasions; the wrath of the Holy One, which they had so thoroughly deserved, and so deeply had provoked; the separation from God, the banishment from his presence, the death they did so righteously entail; that, in the very fulness of that love and sympathy which made him identify himself with us men for our salvation, the horror of such a darkness settled over the mind of the Redeemer, that the face even of his heavenly Father for a moment seemed obscured, that its smile seemed changed into a frown, that the momentary apprehension seized him that in himself that death, that separation from the Father, was about to be realized, so that from his oppressed, bewildered, faltering manhood there came forth the cry, "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

Let us not forget that there was not, indeed could not be—the nature of the connection forbade it—any absolute or entire desertion of the Son by the Father. "Therefore," said Jesus, "doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life for the sheep." Could that love be withdrawn from Jesus when he was in the very act of laying down his life? "This," said the Father, "is my beloved Son, in whom I

am well pleased." Was there ever a time at which he was more pleased with him than when he was offering himself up in that sacrifice so acceptable to God? Nor does the Son ever entirely lose his hold of the Father. Even in this moment of amazement and oppression it is still to God, as *his* God, that he speaks: "*My* God, *my* God! why hast thou forsaken me?" It was the sensible comfort only of the Divine presence and favor which were for the time withdrawn; the felt inflowings of the Divine love which were for the time checked. But what a time of agony must that have been to him who knew, as none other could, what it was to bask in the light of his Father's countenance; who felt, as none other could, that his favor indeed was life! On us—so little do we know or feel what it is to be forsaken by God—the thought of it, or sense of it, may make but a slight impression, produce but little heartfelt misery; but to him it was the consummation and the concentration of all woe, beyond which there was and could be no deeper anguish for the soul.

I have thus presented to you but a single side, as it were, of that sorrow unto death which rent the bosom of the Redeemer, as he was offering himself a sacrifice for us upon the cross. Perhaps it is the side which lies nearest to us, and is most open to our comprehension. Certainly it is one the looking at which believingly is fitted to tell powerfully on our consciences and hearts—to make us feel the exceeding sinfulness of our sin, and set us hopefully and trustfully to struggle with the temptations that beset our path.

In a household which enjoyed all the benefits of high culture and Christian care, one of the children committed a grievous and unexpected fault—he told a falsehood to cover a petty theft; rebuke and punishment were administered, carried farther than they had ever been before, but without effect. The offender was not awakened to any real or deep sorrow for his offence. The boy's insensibility quite overcame his father. Sitting in the same room with his obstinate and sullen child, he bent his head upon his hands, and, sobbing, burst into a flood of tears. For a moment or two the boy looked on in wonder; he then crept gradually nearer and nearer to his sobbing parent, and at last got upon his father's knees, asking, in a low whisper, why it was that he was weeping so. He was told the reason. It wrought like a spell upon his young heart; the sight of his father suffering so bitterly on his account was more than he could bear. He flung his little arms around his father, and wept along with him. That father never needed to correct his child again for any like offence. And surely, if, in that great sorrow which overwhelmed the spirit of our Redeemer on the cross, there mingled, as one of its

ingredients, a grief like, in origin and character, to that which wrung this father's heart, and melted his child to penitence, the sight and thought of it ought to exert a kindred power over those for whom Jesus died.

A younger son is guilty of a great offence against his father. His elder brother, in acting the part of a mediator between the offending child and his offended parent, might voluntarily submit to the exact and the full punishment which his younger brother had deserved—by doing so might turn away the father's wrath, and earn the title to a brother's gratitude. But what if the offender sees his elder brother, at the pure and simple impulse of love, melted into a profound and heart-breaking grief, yearning over him, weeping over him, taking on himself a suffering far more acute than that which the lash of parental discipline might righteously have inflicted on the offender, would not the sight of the pain that his conduct had given one who loved him so tenderly, tell most powerfully in the way of quickening him to a sense of his wrong-doing? Transfer this to our Elder Brother, the Mediator with our offended Father in heaven. The exact punishment which our sin entails—remorse, despair, the sting of a torturing conscience, the felt abiding misery of a soul cut off from the Divine favor—Jesus could not literally bear. He has, indeed, borne that for us which has satisfied the Divine justice, and been accepted as a full and adequate atonement for our transgression; but may it not have been that the suffering in our room and stead, which was accepted of the Father, was part of the suffering which our great sin and his great love drew down on *him*, who, by linking himself to us by the tie of a common humanity, laid a brother's heart open to such a sorrow for our sin as none but the Eternal Son of the Father could have endured? Surely, in the consideration that it was in such kind of suffering with and for our sins that the great Atonement of the cross, in a measure at least, consisted, there is one of the most direct and powerful appeals—one singularly fitted to touch, to soften, to subdue.

I am very conscious how little anything which has as yet been said is fitted to throw full or satisfactory light upon that most mysterious of all the mysterious sayings of our Lord—the plaintive, lonely, loud, and bitter cry which emanated from the cross, which, piercing the overhanging darkness, was heard with wonder in the heavens. It came out of the depth of an anguish that we have no plummet in our hand to sound; and we become only the more conscious how unfathomable that depth is, by trying it here and there with the line of our short-reaching intellect. Instead of hoping to find the bottom anywhere, let us pause upon the brink; adoring, wondering, praising

that great love of our most gracious Saviour, which has a height and a depth, a length and a breadth in it, surpassing all human, all angelic measurement :

"Oh, never, never canst thou know  
 What then for thee the Saviour bore,  
 The pangs of that mysterious woe  
 Which wrung his bosom's inmost core.  
 Yes, man for man perchance may brave  
 The horrors of the yawning grave ;  
 And friend for friend, or son for sire,  
 Undaunted and unmoved expire,  
 From love, or piety, or pride ;  
 But who can die as Jesus died ?"

## XI.

"IT IS FINISHED."\*

WITH the arrival of the ninth hour, the outer darkness cleared away, and with it too the horrors of that inner darkness from whose troubled bosom the cry at last came forth, "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" That mental agony, one of whose ingredients—perhaps to us the most intelligible—I have endeavored to describe, had been endured. The hour for which he came into the world has run its course; the cup which with such a trembling hand he had put to shrinking lips, has been drunk to its dregs; the powers of darkness have made on him their last assault, and been repelled; the momentary darkness of his Father's countenance has passed away. As the sun of nature dispels the gloom that for these three hours had hung around the scene, and sheds once more his illuminating beams upon the cross; even so the light of an answering inward joy comes to cheer in death the spirit of our Redeemer. It is not in darkness, whether outward or inward—not in darkness, but in light, in full, clear, unclouded light, that Jesus dies.

The first, however, and immediate effect of the lifting from his oppressed and burdened heart that load of inward grief which had been laid upon it, was a reviving consciousness of his bodily condition, the awakening of the sensation of a burning thirst. Let the spirit be thoroughly absorbed by any very strong emotion, and the bodily sensations are for the time unfelt or overborne, they fail to attract notice; but let the tide of that overwhelming emotion retreat,

\* Matt. 27 : 47-50 ; Mark 15 : 35-37 ; Luke 23 : 46 ; John 19 : 28-30.



and these sensations once more exert their power. — In the shock of battle, the excited combatant may receive his death-wound, and be unconscious of pain. It is when they lay him down in quiet to die, that exhausted nature betrays a sense of suffering. So is it, after a manner, here with Christ. His lips scarce feel their parchedness as they utter the cry, “My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?” Too full, too agitated, is the soul within, to be keenly alive to bodily sensations. But now that the relief from inward agony has come, the cravings of nature return, and first among these the strong desire for something to alleviate the thirst. This thirst, however, so far from entirely engrossing his thoughts, serves but to suggest to the dying Saviour—and this shows, as we before remarked, how clear and calm and self-possessed he was to the very last—that among all the numerous prophecies which had spoken of the time and manner of his decease, of his being numbered with transgressors, of the shaking of heads, and the shooting out of tongues, the parting of his garments, the casting lots for his vesture, there still was one (see Psa. 69) about their giving him in his thirst vinegar to drink, which remained to be fulfilled. As being, then, at once the natural expression of the feeling of the moment, and the means of bringing about the fulfilment of that prophecy, “Jesus said, *I thirst.*”

In saying so, he made an appeal to the sympathy of his crucifiers, in the belief that they would offer him some of that sour wine, or vinegar which was the ordinary drink of the Roman soldiers. Did Jesus know how that appeal would be met and answered? We cannot but believe he did; and, if so, it stands out as at once the last act in point of time, and one of the lowest in point of degree, of that humiliation before men to which it pleased him to stoop, that he addressed himself as a petitioner to those who treated his petition as they did. Let us try to realize what happened around the cross, immediately after the departure of the three hours’ darkness. One might have expected that the natural awe which that darkness had undoubtedly inspired; the moaning cry, as from one deserted, that came from the cross, as it was rolling away; the fresh sight of Jesus, upon whose pallid features there lingered the traces of his terrible agony; and, last of all, his asking of them to drink—would have conspired to awaken pity, or at least to silence scorn. The coming back, however, of the light—relieving, perhaps, a dread they might have felt that in the darkness Jesus should escape or be delivered—seems to have rekindled that fiendish malignity which now found a last and most demoniac way of expressing itself. “Eli! Eli!” no Jew could possibly misunderstand the words, or imagine that they were a call

to Elias for help. The Roman soldiers did not know enough about Elias to have fallen on any such interpretation. That the words were taken up, played upon by the bystanders, and turned into a new instrument of mockery, shows to what a fiendish length of heartless, pitiless contempt and scorn such passions as those of these scribes and Pharisees, if unrestrained, will go. One, indeed, of those around the cross appears to have been touched with momentary pity, perhaps a Roman soldier, who, when he heard Jesus say, “I thirst,” and looked upon his pale, parched lips, ran and took a stalk of hyssop. From what we know of the size of the plant, this stalk could not have been much above two feet long, but it was long enough to reach the lips of Jesus, the feet of a person crucified not being ordinarily elevated more than a foot or two above the ground. This circumstance explains to us how close to the crucified the soldiers must have stood; how near many of the outstanding crowd may have been; how natural and easy it was for Jesus to speak to Mary and John as he did. To that stalk of hyssop the man attached a sponge, and, dipping it in the vessel of vinegar, that stood at hand, was putting it to the Saviour’s lips, when the mocking crowd cried out, “Let be; let us see whether Elias will come to save him.” This did not stop him from giving Jesus, in his thirst, vinegar to drink. The ancient prophecy he must unconsciously fulfil; but it did serve to half-extinguish the prompting upon which he had begun to act, and induce him to take up into his own lips, and to repeat the current mockery, “Let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.”

When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, “*It is finished!*” It does not fall in with the character or purpose of these remarks, intended to be as purely as possible expository, to take up this memorable expression of our dying Lord, and use it as a text out of which a full exposition of the doctrine of the cross might be derived. Rather, as being more in accordance with our present design, let us endeavor to conceive of, and to enter into, as far as it is possible, the spirit and meaning of the expression as employed by our Lord upon the cross.

First, then, as coming at this time from the Saviour’s lips, it betokens an inward and deep sensation of relief, repose; relief from a heavy burden; repose after a toilsome labor. To the bearing of that burden, the endurance of that toil, Jesus had long and anxiously looked forward. From that time, if time it may be called, when he undertook the high office of the Mediatorship, from the beginning, even from everlasting, through the vista of the future, the cross of his last agony had risen up before his all-seeing eye, as the object

towards which, notwithstanding the dark shadows cast before it, the thought of his spirit stretched forward. In what manner and with what feeling it was regarded by him in the period which preceded his incarnation, it becomes us not to speak, as we have no means of judging; but we can mark how he felt regarding it after he became a man.

In the earlier period of his ministry, Christ practised a strict reserve in speaking of his death. In spite, however, of that self-imposed restraint, broken hints were ever and anon dropping from his lips, sounding quite strange and enigmatical in the ears to which they were addressed. "I have a baptism," said he to his disciples, "to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" When, near the end of his ministry, the necessity for reserve was removed, Jesus spoke openly about his coming death, and always in such a way as to convey the very deepest impression of the profound interest with which he himself contemplated beforehand that great event. So eagerly did he look forward to it, so striking an influence had that prospect even upon his outward aspect and movements, that when, for the last time, he set his face to go up to Jerusalem, and all the things that were to happen to him there came rushing into his mind, he "went before" the twelve, as if impatient to get forward. They were amazed, we are told, as he did so; and as they followed him, and gazed upon him, *they were afraid*. The reason of this rapid gait and strange expression he revealed, when he took them apart by the way, and told them what his thoughts had been dwelling on. There was but one occasion on which he could freely and intelligibly speak out the sentiments of his heart: it was when he stood with Moses and Elias on the mount, and there, even when invested with the glories of transfiguration, the decease which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem was the one chosen topic of discourse. As the time drew near, still oftener was that great decease before his thoughts; still heavier did its impending weight appear to press upon his spirit. It was not, it could not be any mere ordinary human death that so occupied the thoughts of Jesus Christ. We have previously endeavored to make it apparent to you that the true, the real sufferings of that death lay in another, far deeper region than that to which the ordinary pangs of bodily dissolution belong; and we cannot but believe that that internal conflict, that inner agony of soul, reserved for the last days and hours of our Redeemer's life, was broken, as it were, into parts, distributed between the temple, the garden, the cross, for the very purpose of making it palpable, even to the eye of the ordinary observer, that the sufferings of the Re-

deemer's soul formed, as has been well said, the very soul of his sufferings. And when those mysterious sufferings, so long looked forward to, at last were over, the load borne and lifted off, with what a deep inward feeling of relief and repose must Jesus have said, "It is finished!"

Secondly, connecting this expression with what went so immediately before—our Lord's remembrance of all that was needful to be done to him and by him in dying, in order that the Scriptures might be fulfilled—it may reasonably be assumed that he meant thereby to declare the final close and completion of that long series of types and prophecies of his death which crowd the pages of the Old Testament Scriptures. In the very number and variety of these types and prophecies, another attestation meets our eye to the preëminent importance of that event to which they point. If you take the twenty-four hours which embrace the last night and day of our Redeemer's life, you will find that more frequent and more minute preintimations of what occurred throughout their course are to be found in the prophetic pages, than of what happened in any other equal period in the history of our globe. The seemingly trifling character of some of the incidents which are made the subjects of prophecy at first surprises us; but that surprise changes into wonder as we perceive that they fix our attention upon the death of Jesus Christ, as the central incident of this world's strange history, the one around which the whole spiritual government of this earth revolves.—By all those promises and prophecies, those typical persons and typical events and typical services, the raising of the altar, the slaying of the sacrifice, the institution of the priesthood, the ark with its broken tables and sprinkled mercy-seat, the passover, the great day of atonement, the passage of the high priest within the veil; by the voice of God himself speaking, in the first promise, about the seed of the woman, and the bruising of his heel; by the wonderful Psalms of David, in which the general description of the suffering righteous man passes into those minute details which were embodied in the crucifixion; by those rapt utterances of Isaiah, some portions of which read now more like histories of the past than intimations of the future—the eye of this world's hope was turned to that event beforehand, as backward to it the eye of the world's faith has ever since been directed.

But, thirdly, that we may make our way into the very heart of its meaning, does not the expression, "It is finished," suggest the idea of a prescribed, a distinct, a definite work, brought to a final, satisfactory, and triumphant conclusion? Spoken in no boastful



spirit, it is the language of one who, having had a great commission given him, a great task assigned, announces that the commission has been executed, the task fulfilled. Taking it as the simple announcement of the fact, that some great transaction was brought to its consummation, we ask ourselves, as we contemplate the entire circle of the Redeemer's services to our race, still running out their course, what part of these services was it of which it could be said that it was then finished? Here, in the foreground, we have to put that one and perfect sacrifice which he offered up for the sin of the world. Through the Eternal Spirit, he offered himself without spot to God, and by that one sacrifice for sin, once for all, he hath perfected for ever those that are sanctified; he hath done all that was needed to atone for human guilt, to redeem us from the curse of the law, to finish transgression, to make an end of sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity.

But again, Christ's death upon the cross brought to a close that obedience to the Divine law, that perfect fulfilment of all the righteousness which is required; held out to us as the ground upon which we are to find immediate and full acceptance with our Maker. "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." "He made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God: being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Farther still—though embraced indeed in the two particulars of the sufferings and services of the Redeemer already mentioned—there was finished upon the cross the new, the full, the wonderful revelation of the Father, that unbosoming of the Eternal, the opening up to us of the very heart of the Godhead, the exhibition of the mingled love and holiness of our Father who is in heaven. There was completed then that glorious, that attractive, that subduing manifestation of the love of God for sinful men, which carried the Divine Being to the extreme length of suffering and of self-sacrifice, and which has ever formed the most powerful of all instruments for pacifying the conscience, melting the heart, moulding the character, renewing and sanctifying the will.

Whether, then, he looked up to God, and thought of his having

glorified his name, finished the work that had been given him to do; or whether he looked down to man, and thought of the saving power which his cross was to exert over millions upon millions of the human family, it may well have been to Jesus Christ a moment of intensest joy, when—his latest pang endured, his last service rendered, his strictly vicarious work completed—he exclaimed, “It is finished!” ~

To Jesus Christ alone was given that joy in dying which springs from the knowledge that all the ends of living and dying had been perfectly answered. Looking upon the career he had pursued, he could see not a single blot nor blank space in the whole. Of what other man, cut off as he was in the midst of his years, could the same be said? When good and great men die in the full flush of their manhood, the full vigor of their powers, we are apt to mourn the untimely stroke that has laid them low, that has cut short so many of the undertakings they were engaged in, deprived the world of so much service that it was in their heart to have rendered. Nor can any such look back upon the past without this humbling feeling in the retrospect, that many an offence has been committed, many a duty left imperfectly discharged. But for us there is no place for mourning, as we contemplate the death of our Redeemer, which came to close the one and only life which, stainless throughout its every hour, did so thoroughly and to the last degree of the Divine requirement accomplish all that had been intended. And for him it was as if the cup of bitterness having been drunk, the cry of agony as he drained the last drop of it having been uttered, there was given to him, even before he died, to taste a single drop of that other cup—that cup of full ecstatic bliss, which the contemplation of the travail of his soul, of the glory it rendered to the Father, the good it did to man, shall never cease to yield.

But to what practical use are we to turn this declaration of our dying Saviour? He rested complacently, gratefully, exultingly, in the thought that his work for us was finished. Shall we not try to enter into the full meaning of this great saying? Shall we not try, in the way in which it becomes us, to enter with him into that same rest? For the forgiveness, then, of all our sins, for our acceptance with a holy and righteous God, let us put our sole, immediate, and entire trust upon this finished work of our Redeemer; let us believe, that whatever obstacles our guilt threw in the way of our being received back into the Divine favor, have been removed; that whatever the holiness of the lawgiver, and the integrity of his law, and the moral interests of his government required in the way of atone-

ment or expiation, has been rendered. Let us look upon the way of access to God as lying quite open to us; let us take the pardon; let us enter into peace with God; let us bring all our guilt and bury it in the depths of his atonement. Let us lay hold of the righteousness of Christ, and clothe ourselves with it in the Divine presence; and regarding the reconciliation with God, effected by the death of his dear Son, as only the first step or stage of the Christian salvation, let us throw open our whole mind and heart to the blessed influences that Christ's love, his life, his sufferings, his death, his entire example were intended to exert in making us less selfish, more loving, more dutiful, more thankful, more submissive, more holy.

There still remain, for one or two brief remarks, these last words of our Redeemer: "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." The words are borrowed from one of the Psalms. Jesus dies with a passage of the old Hebrew Scriptures on his lips, only he prefaces the words by the epithet so familiar to his lips and heart, "Father." In the depth of his bitter anguish, under the darkness of momentary desolation, he had dropped this phrase. It had been then, "My God, my God!" But now, once more, in the light that shines within, around, he resumes it, and he says, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." If the saying which went before, "It is finished," be taken, as it well may be, as Christ's last word of farewell to the world he leaves behind, this may be taken as his first word of greeting to the new world that he is about to enter. *New world*, we say, for though, as the Eternal Son, he was but returning to the glory that he had with the Father before the world was, let us not forget that death was to the humanity of the Lord—as it will be to each and all of us—an entrance upon a new and untried state. It seems to us as if, in these last words of our Elder Brother, it was that nature of ours he wore which breathed itself forth in our hearing; that human nature which, when the hour of departure comes, looks out with trembling solicitude into the world of spirits, seeking for some one there into whose hands the departing spirit may confidently commit itself. In the "It is finished," the voice of the great High Priest, the Eternal Son of the Father, predominates. In the "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit," is it not the voice of the man Christ Jesus that mainly salutes our ear? No timidity, indeed, nor fear, nor any such trembling awe as any of us might fitly feel in dying. Nothing of these; not a shadow of them here; yet certainly solemnity, concern, the sense as of a need of some support, some upbearing hand. And shall we not thank our Saviour, that not only has he made the passage before us, and opened for us, in doing so, the gate

to eternal life, but taught us, by his own example, not to wonder if our weak human nature, as it stands upon the brink, should look out with an eager solicitude to find the hands into which, in making the great transition, it may throw itself?

And where shall *we* find those hands? He found them in the hands of that Father, who at all times had been so well pleased with him. We find them in *his* hands who went thus before us to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God. He too found them there who has left us the earliest example how a true Christian may and ought to die. Considering the small number of the Lord's disciples, we may believe that Stephen was not only the first of the Christian martyrs, but actually the first after the crucifixion who fell asleep in Jesus. Can we doubt that in dying the last words of Jesus were in Stephen's memory? There had been too many points of resemblance between his own and his Master's trial and condemnation, for Stephen not to have the close of the Redeemer's life before his mind. His dying prayer is an echo of that which came from his Master's lips; the same, yet changed. It might do for the sinless one to say, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." It is not for the sinful to take up at once and appropriate such words; so, turning to Jesus, the dying martyr says, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," in that simple, fervent, confiding petition, leaving behind him, for all ages, the pattern of a sinner's dying prayer, modelled upon the last words of the dying Saviour.

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## - XII.

### THE ATTENDANT MIRACLES.\*

IN all its outward form and circumstance, there scarcely could have been a lowlier entrance into this world of ours than that made by Jesus Christ. The poorest wandering gypsy's child has seldom had a meaner birth. There was no room for Mary in the inn. She brought forth her firstborn son amid the beasts of the stall, and she laid him in a manger. But was that birth—which, though it had so little about it to draw the notice of man, was yet the greatest that this earth has ever witnessed—to pass by without any token of its greatness given? No; other eyes than those of men were fixed on it, and other tongues were loosened to celebrate it. The glory of the

\* Matt. 27:51-54; Mark 15:39; Luke 23:47-49; John 19:31-37.



Lord shone around the shepherds, and the multitude of the heavenly host, borrowing for a time the speech of Canaan, filled the midnight sky with their praises as they chanted, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." Never was there a lowlier cradle than that in which the new-born Redeemer lay; but over what other cradle was there ever such a birth-hymn sung?

And as with the birth, so also with the death of Jesus. In all its outward form and circumstance, a more humiliating death than that of being crucified as one of three convicted felons, he could not have died. There was no darker, more degrading passage through which he could have been sent forth from among the living. But was that death of the Eternal Son of God to have no outward marks of its importance imprinted on it? Left to man, there had been none; but heaven will not let it pass unsignalized. And so, at mid-day the darkness came and settled for three hours around the cross; and when at the ninth hour Jesus gave up the ghost, the veil of the temple was torn in twain from the top to the bottom, and the rocks rent, and the graves opened. These were the external seals which the hand of the Omnipotent stamped upon the event, proclaiming its importance. But these seals were also symbols; they were more than mere preternatural indications that this was no common death. Each in its way told something about the character and object of this death. The mystery of those hidden sufferings of the Redeemer's spirit—the inner darkening of the light of his Father's countenance—stood shadowed forth in the three hours' darkness. The rending of the veil had a meaning of its own, which it scarcely needed an apostle to interpret. To the few eyes that witnessed it, it must have been a most mysterious spectacle. Jesus died at the third hour after mid-day; the very hour when eager crowds of worshippers would be thronging into the courts of the temple, and all would be preparing for the evening sacrifice. Within the holy place, kindling perhaps the many lights of the golden candlestick, some priests would be busy before the inner veil which hung between them and the holy of holies; that veil no thin, old, time-worn piece of faded drapery, but fresh and strong, and thickly woven, for they renewed it year by year; that holy of holies—the dark, secluded apartment within which lay the ark of the covenant, with the cherubim above it shadowing the mercy-seat, which no mortal footstep was permitted to invade, save that of the high priest once only every year. How strange, how awful to the ministering priests, standing before that veil, to feel the earth tremble beneath their feet, and to see the strong veil grasped, as if by two unseen hands of superhuman strength, and torn down in

the middle from top to bottom—the glaring light of day, that never, for long centuries gone by, had entered there, flung into that sacred tenement, and all its mysteries laid open to vulgar gaze. The Holy Ghost by all this signified that while as yet that first tabernacle was standing, the way into the holiest, the access to God, was not yet made manifest; but now, Christ being come, to offer himself without spot to God, neither by the blood of goats nor calves, but by his own blood, to enter into the true holy of holies—even as he died on Calvary that veil was rent asunder thus within the temple to teach us that a new and living way, open to all, accessible to all, had been consecrated for us through the rending of the Redeemer's flesh, that we might have boldness to enter into the holiest, and might draw near, each one of us, to God, with a new heart and in full assurance of faith. Little of all this may those few priests have known who stood that day gazing with awe-struck wonder upon that working of the Divine and unseen hand—to them a sign of terror, rather than a symbol of what the death on Calvary had done. We read, however, that not long afterwards—within a year—many priests became obedient unto the faith; and it pleases us to think that among those who, from the inner heart of Judaism, from the stronghold of its priestly caste, were converted unto Christ, some of those may have been numbered whose first movement in that direction was given them as they witnessed that rending of the veil, that laying OPEN of the most holy place.

“And the earth did quake: and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened”—the main office, let us believe, of that earthquake which accompanied, or immediately followed upon the death of Christ—not to strike terror into the hearts of men; not to herald judgments upon this earth; not to swallow up the living in its opening jaws; no, but to shake the domains of death; to break the stony fetters of the dead; to lay open the graves, out of which the bodies of the saints might arise. It seems clear enough, from the words which Matthew uses—who is the only one of the evangelists who alludes to the event—that they did not come out of their graves till the morning of our Lord's own resurrection. It is scarcely conceivable that they had been reanimated before that time, and lain awake in their graves till his rising called them from their tombs. Then they did arise, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many—one, certainly, of the most mysterious incidents which attended the death and resurrection of the Saviour, suggesting many a question: Who were they that thus arose? were they of the recently dead, recognized by loving relatives in the holy city; or were they

chosen from the buried of many bygone generations? Did they return to their sepulchres, or did the grave never more close over them? Did they, after a brief appearance in the holy city, pass into the heavenly Jerusalem? or did they linger upon this earth, to be the companions of our Lord during those forty days, so small a portion of which is occupied by Christ's appearance to his disciples, the rest spent where and how we know not; and did they, that ministry to Jesus over, go up with him into the heavenly places? All about them is hid in the deepest obscurity. Like shadows they come, like shadows they depart. This, however, their presence told, that the voice which from the cross cried, "It is finished," went where sound of human voice had never gone before, and did what sound of human voice had never done. It was heard among the dead; it stirred the heavy sleepers there, and piercing the stony sepulchre, went quivering into ears long sealed against all sound. And when the third morning dawned, these bodies of the saints arose, to complete as it were the pledge and promise of the general resurrection of the dead which our Lord's own rising carried with it, and having done that office, silently and mysteriously withdrew. You may have sometimes seen a day in early spring, stolen from the coming summer, a day of sunshine so bright and warm, of air so bland, of breeze so gentle, that, as if fancying that her resurrection-time had come, dead nature woke, buds began to burst, flower leaves to unfold, and birds to sing—all to be shut up again in death, as the bleak withering winds of days that followed swept across the plain. Even into such a day did the appearance of these old tenants of the grave turn that of our Lord's resurrection, lightening and enriching it with the promise of the time when all that are in their graves shall hear Christ's voice, and his full and final victory over death and the grave shall be accomplished.

Mark the evangelist, to whom we are indebted for so many minute and graphic incidents in the gospel history, tells us that at the moment when Christ expired, the Roman officer in charge was standing over against him, within a few yards of the cross, gazing on the face of the Crucified. He had halted there as the darkness rolled away. He heard that loud and piercing cry, as of one forsaken, come from the lips of Jesus. He saw the change come over the Saviour's countenance, the light that spread over those pallid features, the joy that beamed from those uplifted eyes. Another and a louder cry—not now the cry as of one sinking in conflict, but of one rejoicing in victory—when suddenly Jesus bows his head and gives up the ghost; that moment, too, the earthquake shook the earth, and the cross of



Jesus trembled before the Roman's eyes. The shaking earth, the trembling cross, impressed him less, as Mark lets us know, than the loud cry so instantly followed by death. He had, perhaps, been present at other crucifixions, and knew well how long the band he ruled was ordinarily required to watch the crucified. But he had never seen, he had never known, he had never heard of a man dying upon a cross within six hours. He had seen other men expire; had watched weak nature as it wanes away at death—the voice sinking into feebleness with its last efforts at articulation—but he had never heard a man in dying speak in tones like these. And so impressed was he with what he saw and heard, that instantly and spontaneously he exclaimed, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" Foreigner and Gentile as he was, he may have attached no higher meaning to the epithet than Pilate did when he said to Jesus, "Art thou then the Son of God?" This much, however, he meant to say, that truly and to his judgment this Jesus was more than human—was divine—was that very Son of God, whatever this might mean, which these Jews had condemned him for claiming to be. Such was the faith so quickly kindled in this Gentile breast. The cross is early giving tokens of its power. It lays hold of the dying thief, and opens to him the gates of paradise. It lays hold of this centurion, and works in him a faith which, let us hope, deepened into a trust in Jesus as his Saviour. From such unlikely quarters came the two testimonies borne to the Lord's divinity the day he died.

The centurion speaks of him as one already dead. The pale face and the drooping head tell all the lookers-on that he has breathed his last. The great interest of the day is over; the crowd breaks up; group after group returning to Jerusalem, in very different mood and temper from that in which they had come out a few hours before. It had been little more at first than an idle curiosity which had drawn many of those onlookers that morning from their dwellings. Cherishing, perhaps, no particular ill-will to Jesus, they had joined the procession on its way to Calvary. They gather by the way that this Jesus had been convicted as a pretender, who had impiously claimed to be their king, their Christ. They see how irritated the high priests and their followers are at him. It is an unusual thing for these magnates of the people to come out, as they now are doing, to attend a public execution. There must surely be something peculiarly criminal in this Jesus, against whom their enmity is so bitter. Soon these new-comers catch the spirit that their rulers have breathed into the crowd, and for the first three hours they heartily chime in with the others, and keep up their



mockery of the crucified. But from the moment that the darkness falls upon them, what a change! There they stand, silently peering through the gloom; no jest nor laughter now, nor strife of mocking tongues. Upon that cross, but dimly seen, their eyes are fixed. The wonder grows as to how all this shall end. It ends with those prodigies that accompany the death. Appalled by these, they smite upon their breasts—as Easterns do in presence of all superhuman power—and make their way back to their homes; no noisy, shouting rabble, but each man silent, and full of thought and awe. Who or what, then, could that Jesus be whom they had seen die such a death—at whose death the whole frame of nature seemed to quiver? Whatever he was, he was not what their rulers had told them. No false, deceitful man, no impious pretender. Was he then indeed their Christ, their king? They got the answer to those questions a few weeks later, when Peter preached to that great company on the day of Pentecost; and may we not believe that among those who listened to the great apostle on that occasion, and to whom he spake as to the very men who, with wicked hands, had slain the Lord of glory, there were not a few of those who now returned to Jerusalem from Calvary, impressed and half-convinced, waiting but the work of the Spirit to turn them into true and faithful followers of the Crucified?

Such was the impression made upon the Roman officer, and on a section of the bystanders. But the high priests and their minions, the true crucifiers of the Lord—what impression has all which has happened thus at Calvary made on them? Has it stirred any doubt, has it awakened any compunction, has it allayed their fears or quenched their hate? No; they witness all these wonders, and remain hard and unrelenting as at the first. Speaking of that obduracy, which stood out against all the demonstrations of the Lord's divinity, St. Gregory exclaims: "The heavens knew him, and forthwith sent out a star and a company of angels to sing his birth. The sea knew him, and made itself a way to be trodden by his feet; the earth knew him, and trembled at his dying; the sun knew him, and hid the rays of his light; the rocks knew him, for they were rent in twain; Hades knew him, and gave up the dead it had received." But though the senseless elements perceived him to be their Lord, the hearts of the unbelieving Jews knew him not as God, and, harder than the very rocks, were not rent by repentance."

The only effect upon the rulers of the Jewish people of the sudden death of Jesus was to set them thinking how the crosses and

bodies which hung upon them might most speedily be removed. Their own Jewish code forbade that the body of one hung upon a tree should remain over a single night: "His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day, that thy land be not defiled." See Deut. 21. As crucifixion was a mode of punishment originally unknown among the Jews, this command refers to the case of those who, after death by stoning or strangulation, were hung upon a gibbet. The Roman law and practice were different. Crucifixion was the mode of death to which slaves and the greater criminals were doomed. In ordinary circumstances, the bodies of the crucified were suffered to hang upon the cross till the action of the elements, at times otherwise aided and accelerated, wasted them away. Even when sepulture was allowed, it was thought profitable for the ends of justice that for some days the frightful spectacle should be exposed to the public eye. In no case under the Roman rule did burial take place on the very day of the execution. If that rule were in this instance to be broken, it must be under the special leave and direction of Pilate. Besides, however, the natural desire that their own rather than the Roman method of dealing with the crucified should be followed, there was another and more special reason why the Jews desired that the bodies should as quickly as possible be removed. Next day was the Sabbath; no common Sabbath either—the Sabbath of the great Paschal festival. It began at sunset. Only an hour or two remained. It would be offensive, ill-ominous, if on a day so sacred three bodies hanging upon crosses should be exhibited so near the holy city. It would disturb, defile the services of the holy day. Besides, who could tell what effect upon the changeful, excitable multitude this spectacle of Jesus might have, if kept so long before their eyes? A deputation is despatched, therefore, to Pilate, to entreat him to give orders that means may be taken to expedite the death by crucifixion, and have the bodies removed. Pilate accedes to the request; the necessary order is forwarded to Calvary, and the soldiers proceed in the ordinary way to execute it. They break the legs of both the others; they pass Jesus by. There is every sign, indeed, that he is already dead, but why not make his death thus doubly sure? Perhaps, even over the spirits of those rough and hardened men, the Saviour's looks and words, the manner of his death, the darkness and the earthquake, which they connected in some way with him, may have caused a feeling of awe to creep, restraining them from subjecting him to that rough handling which they were ready enough to give to the others. However this may have been, the

shield of that prophecy—"A bone of him shall not be broken," guarded his limbs from their rude and crushing strokes.

- One, indeed, of the soldiers is not to be restrained, and to make sure that this seeming death is real, he lifts his spear as he passes by, and thrusts it into the Redeemer's side; a strong, rude thrust, sufficient of itself to have caused death, inflicting a wide, deep wound, that left behind such a scar, that Jesus could say to Thomas afterwards, "Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side." From that wound there flowed out blood and water, in such quantity, that the outflow attracted the special notice of John, who was standing at some distance from the cross; the blood and the water so distinct and distinguishable from one another, that this observer could not be deceived, and thought it right to leave behind him this peculiarly emphatic testimony: "He that saw it, bare record, and his record is true; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe." It has been thought that John was led to put such stress upon this incident of the crucifixion, and to press into such prominence his own testimony as an eye-witness to its reality, on account of the convincing refutation thus afforded of two strange heresies that sprung up early in the church: the first, that Jesus never really died upon the cross, but only passed into a swoon, from which he afterwards revived; and the second, that it was not a real human body of flesh and blood, but only the appearance of one that was suspended on the cross. It may have been that the evangelist had these beliefs in view. But whatever was his immediate object in testifying so particularly and so earnestly to the fact, it only puts that fact so much the more clearly now before our eyes, authorizing us to assume it as placed beyond all doubt, that within an hour or so after Christ's death—for it could not have been much longer, when a deep incision was made in the side of the Redeemer, there visibly flowed forth a copious stream of blood and water. Is that fact of any moment, does it give any clue to, or throw any light upon the proximate or physical cause of the death of Christ? The answer to these questions we reserve for the present.

Meanwhile, let us give a moment or two more to reflection upon that strange variety of impression and the effect which the crucifixion of our Lord had upon the original spectators. There were those whom that spectacle plunged into a despondency bordering on despair. Mary, the mother of our Lord was not able to bear that sight, and the love of her divine Son went forth, and withdrew her early from the trial of seeing him expire. His other acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off,



beholding; half ashamed and half afraid; with something of hope, with more of fear; lost in wonder that he, about whom they had been cherishing such grand, yet false and earthly expectations, should suffer himself, or should be suffered by that Father—of whom he had so often spoken as hearing him always, who had himself declared that he was at all times well pleased with him—to die such a death as this. As the darkness fell, perhaps a new hope sprung up within some of their breasts. Was Jesus about to use that darkness as a veil behind which he would withdraw himself, as he had withdrawn himself from those who were about to cast him from the rocky height at Nazareth? Had he gone up to that cross to work there the greatest of his miracles? and was he in very deed about to meet the taunt of his enemies, and come down from the cross that they might believe in him? Alas! if any such hope arose, the ninth hour quenched it; and when they saw him draw his latest breath, this band of friends and followers of Jesus turned their backs on Calvary, with slow, sad footsteps to return, dispirited and disconsolate, to their homes. Mainly this was owing to the strength of that prejudice which had so early taken such strong possession of their minds, that the kingdom which their new Master was to set up was a temporal one. To that prejudice so sudden and so overwhelming a shock was given by the crucifixion, that, stunned and stupefied by it, these simple-minded followers of Jesus were for a time unable to recall, and unprepared to believe, his own predictions as to his death. Upon the scribes and Pharisees, the chief priests and rulers of the people, the six hours of the crucifixion had, as we have seen, none other than a hardening effect. The gentleness, the patience, the forgiving spirit, the thoughtfulness for others, the sore trouble of his own spirit, the supernatural darkness, the returning light, the sudden and sublime decease, the reeling earth, the opening graves—all these, which might have moved them, had they not been possessed by the one great passion of quenching for ever the hated pretensions of this Nazarene—have no other influence upon their spirits than quickening their ingenuity to contrive how best, most quickly, and most securely, they can accomplish their design. And these are they of all that motley crowd, who knew the most, and made the greatest profession of religion! These are the men who would not that morning cross the threshold of Pilate's dwelling, lest they might unfit themselves for the morrow's duties within the temple! These are the men who cannot bear the thought that the services of their great Paschal Sabbath should be polluted by the proximity of the three crosses of Golgotha! They can spill, without compunction,



the blood of the innocent. They can take that blood upon themselves and upon their children, but they cannot suffer the sight of it to offend their eye as they go up to worship upon Mount Zion. These are the men who, in their deep self-ignorance, in their proud and boastful spirit, were wont to say, "If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." These are the men whose whole character and conduct are suggestive of the likenesses to themselves that have arisen in every age of the church, one of whose noted peculiarities is ever this, that to wound their pride, or expose in any way their hollow pretensions, is sure to draw down on all who attempt the dangerous office the very same malignity of dislike and persecution that nailed our Saviour to his cross.

Upon many of the crowd which stood for those six hours around the cross, the events that transpired there appear to have produced that surprise, solemnity, alarm, and subdued state of feeling, they were so fitted to produce on the bulk of mankind. We have already ventured to express the hope that, with not a few of them, what they saw and heard prepared their minds and opened their hearts to receive the good seed which, scattered on the day of Pentecost by apostolic hands, was so watered with the influences of the Holy Spirit.

But are we wrong in imagining, of another and perhaps still larger proportion of those who returned, beating their breasts, to Jerusalem, that a few days, or a few weeks, brought them down to their ordinary and natural condition of indifference and unconcern? Yes, they would say, that was a wonderful forenoon; there was a strange occurrence of striking things about the close of that strange man's life; but to any further inquiry after him—the lending their ears to that gospel which set him forth as crucified to redeem their souls from death, and cover, by his mediation, the multitude of their sins—they became too callous, the world had too strong a hold of them, to admit of their giving any further or more earnest heed. Have not these, too, their likenesses among us? men capable of strong but temporary impressions. Bring them to Golgotha, set up the cross before them, let them see the Saviour die, and their breasts may own a sentiment akin to that which affected so many personally at Calvary: but they are morning clouds those feelings, it is an early dew this softening of their hearts; let the bright sun rise, the fresh breeze blow; let the day, with so many calls to business and pleasure come, and those clouds vanish—this dew disappears. And yet the cross was not to be lifted up in vain. It hardened the Pharisees,

it dispirited the disciples, it awed the multitude; but it saved the penitent thief, and it convinced the unprejudiced centurion. "I," said the Lord himself, contemplating beforehand the triumph of his cross—"I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." And when he was lifted up, even before he died, and in the very act of dying, he drew to him that Gentile and that Jew, each one the leader of a multitude that no man may number, upon whom the power of that attraction has since acted. God grant that upon all our spirits this power may come, drawing us to Jesus now, and lifting us at last to heaven.

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### XIII.

#### - THE PHYSICAL CAUSE OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST.\*

HAD no one interfered, the body of our Lord had been taken down by the soldiers from the cross, by their cold and careless hands to be conveyed away to one of those separate burying-places reserved for those who had suffered the extreme penalty of the law. Not unfrequently, in such cases, friends or relatives came forward to crave the body at the hands of the authorities, that they might give it a more becoming burial. There was but one exception, the case of those whose crime was treason against the state—the very crime for which Christ had, nominally at least, been condemned. In that instance the mode of disposal of the body prescribed by law was rarely if ever departed from. But where are there any friends or relatives of Jesus in condition hopefully to interfere? That small band of his acquaintance, which had stood throughout the crucifixion beholding it afar off, is composed principally of women. John, indeed, is there, a witness of the closing scene, and of the preparation made for the removal of the bodies. But was Pilate, to whom application must of course be made, likely to listen to any petition that he might present? John knew something of the high priest, but nothing of the Roman governor. There was everything in fact to discourage him from making any application in that quarter, even if the idea of doing so had occurred to him. But it is most unlikely that it had. For what could John, or the disciples generally, have done with the body of their Master though they had got it into their hands? It must be buried quickly—within an hour or so. And where could

\* John 19 : 33-35 ; Mark 15 : 42-45.

these Galilean strangers find a grave at Jerusalem to lay it in, where but in some exposed and public place of sepulture, unsuitable for the destiny in store for it?

At the fitting time, the fit instrument appears. Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man, an honorable councillor, a member of the Sanhedrim, well known as such to Pilate, has either himself been present at the crucifixion, or hears how matters stand. Shall the body of Jesus pass into the rough hands of these Roman soldiers, and be dragged by them to a dishonored burial? Not if he can hinder it. He has a new sepulchre of his own, close by the very place where Christ has died, whose very nearness to the spot suggests to him how suitable a place it would be for so sacred a deposit. Joseph goes instantly to Pilate, and boldly asks that the body may be given to him. Pilate makes no difficulty regarding the alleged crime of Jesus. He never had believed that Christ was guilty of treason against Caesar's government; does not now act on any such assumption. But Joseph has told him something about the time and manner of the Saviour's death which he had not heard before, which greatly amazes and induces him to hesitate. Those Jews who had come to him a short time before, with the request that he would issue an order that the bones of the three might be broken and their bodies removed, must have come to him after the three hours' darkness, after the death of Christ. But they had told him nothing about that death. They had spoken as if the same means for expediting their decease had to be taken with all the three. Now, for the first time, he hears that Jesus had, even then, breathed his last; had died just as that mysterious darkness, which had troubled Pilate as it had troubled the crowd at Golgotha, had rolled away; as that earthquake, which had shaken every dwelling in Jerusalem, had been felt within his residence. Pilate will not believe it—can scarcely credit Joseph's story—must have a thing so strange attested upon better testimony. Waiving, in the meantime, all answer to Joseph's request, he sends for the centurion, who, doubtless, told him all that he had witnessed; told him about the loud voice, and the immediately succeeding death; told him what raised in the eyes of these two Romans, even to the height of a miracle, a death like this.

We should understand their feelings better were we as familiar as they were with the common course of things at a crucifixion. It is now fifteen hundred years since this mode of punishment ceased to be practised in Christendom; it was discontinued because of the sacredness, the spiritual glory which Christ's crucifixion had thrown around it. With eyes unfamiliar with its details, yet with imagina-

tions that delighted to picture its cruelties and horrors, the priesthood of the middle ages put these materials into the hands of poets and painters, out of which the popular conceptions of the erection of the cross, and the sufferings on the cross, and the taking down from the cross, have for so long a time been drawn. There is much in these conceptions, that by using the means of information which we now possess, we can assure ourselves is incorrect. The cross was no such elevated structure as we see it sometimes represented, needing ladders to be applied to get at the suspended body. It was seldom more than a foot or two higher than the man it bore; neither was the whole weight of his body borne upon the nails which pierced the hands. — Such a position of painful suspension, causing such a strain upon all the muscles of the upper extremities, would have added greatly to the sufferings of the victim, and brought them to a much speedier close. The cross, in every instance, was furnished with a small piece of wood projecting from the upright post or beam, astride which the crucified sat, and which bore the chief weight of his body. The consequence of this arrangement was, that crucifixion was a much more lingering kind of death, and in its earlier stages, a much less excruciating one than we are apt to imagine, or than otherwise it would have been. As there was but little loss of blood—the nails that pierced the extremities touching no large blood-vessel, and closing the wounds they made—the death which followed resulted from the processes of bodily exhaustion and irritation; and these were so slow, that in no case, where the person was in ordinary health and vigor, did they terminate within twelve hours. Almost invariably he survived the first twenty-four hours, lived generally over the second, occasionally even into the fifth or sixth day. The ancient testimonies to this fact are quite explicit, nor are modern ones wanting, although there are but few parts of the world now where crucifixion is practised. “I was told,” says Captain Clapperton, speaking of the capital punishments inflicted in Soudan, a district of Africa, “that wretches on the cross generally linger three days before death puts an end to their sufferings.”

So well was it understood by the early fathers of the church, by those who lived in or near the times when this mode of capital punishment was still in use, that life never was terminated by it alone within six hours, as was the case with Christ, that they all agree in attributing his death to a supernatural agency. Most of them, as well as many of the most distinguished of our modern commentators, assign it to the exercise by Christ of the power over his own life which he possessed; in accordance, it was thought, with his own dec-



laration: "No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."—That Christ's death was entirely voluntary, submitted to of his own free will, and not under any outward pressure or constraint, is universally conceded. This entire voluntariness, however, it will at once appear to you, is sufficiently covered and vindicated, when we believe that whatever the physical agencies were which combined to effect the death, it was an act of pure free will in him to submit to their operation. That without or independent of any such agency, Christ chose to accelerate his decease upon the cross by a simple fiat of his own will—breaking the tie which bound body and soul together, was the solution of the difficulty very naturally resorted to by those who had the clearest possible perception of the extraordinary character of this incident, and who knew of no other adequate cause to which it could be attributed.

Another solution, indeed, has been proposed, reserved for modern times, but not coming from our highest authorities, which would explain the speedy death of Jesus on the cross by ascribing it to an extreme degree of bodily debility induced by the sleepless nights, the agony in the garden, the scourging in Pilate's hall, and the mental conflict at Calvary. All these must undoubtedly have told upon the frame of the suffering Redeemer, and have impaired its powers of endurance. But we must remember that they found that frame in the very flower and fulness of its strength, free, we may believe, of all constitutional or induced defects.—Nor should we, in order to make out this solution to be sufficient, exaggerate their actual effects. However acute the bodily sufferings of Gethsemane may have been, we know that Jesus was supernaturally assisted to sustain them; they passed wholly away when the mental agony which produced them ended. You see no trace of them, in our Lord's presentation of himself to the band which arrested him, or in his appearances before Caiaphas and Pilate. The scourging was a not uncommon precursor of crucifixion, and could not have enfeebled Christ more than it did others. He bent so much beneath the weight of the cross that a temporary relief from the burden was given; but that he had not sunk in utter exhaustion was apparent enough, from the very manner in which he turned immediately thereafter to the daughters of Jerusalem, and from the way in which he spoke to them. Further evidence that Jesus did not sink prematurely under physical debility is afforded us by the fact, witnessed to particularly by many of the evangelists, and which, as we have already observed, made a strong

impression upon the mind of the centurion. The fact alluded to is this, that it was with a loud voice, indicating a great amount of existing vigor, that Jesus uttered his last fervent exclamation on the cross. He did not die of sheer exhaustion, fainting away in feebleness, as one drained wholly of his strength.

Are we, then, to leave the mystery of our Lord's dying thus, at the ninth hour, in the obscurity which covers it; or is there any other probable explanation of the circumstance? It is now some years since a devout and scholarly physician,\* as the result, he tells us, of a quarter of a century's reading and reflection, ventured to suggest—dealing with this subject with all that reverence and delicacy with which it so especially requires to be handled—that the immediate physical cause of the death of Christ was the rupture of his heart, induced by the inner agony of his spirit.—That strong emotion may of itself prostrate the body in death, is a familiar fact in the history of the passions.† Joy, or grief, or anger, suddenly or intensely excited, has been often known to produce this effect. It is only, however, in later times that the discovery has been made, by *post-mortem* examinations, that in such instances, the death resulted from actual rupture of the heart. That organ, which the universal language of mankind has spoken of as being peculiarly affected by the play of the passions, has been found in such cases to have been rent or torn by the violence of its own action. The blood issuing from the fissure thus created has filled the pericardium,‡ and, by its pressure, stopped the action of the heart. In speaking of those who have died of a broken heart, we have been using words that were often exactly and literally true.

If this, then, be sometimes one of the proved results of extreme, intense emotion, why may it not have been realized in the case of the Redeemer? If common earthly sorrow has broken other human hearts, why may not that sorrow, deep beyond all other sorrow, have broken his? We know that of itself, apart from all external appliances, the agony of his spirit in Gethsemane so affected his body that a bloody sweat suffused it—a result identical with what has been sometimes noticed of extreme surprise or terror having bathed

\* Dr. Stroud, in a treatise "On the Physical Cause of the Death of Christ," published in 1847.

† Ancient story tells us of one of the greatest of Greek tragedians (Sophocles) expiring on its being announced to him that the palm of victory had been awarded him, in a public literary contest in which he was engaged; of a father dying on its being told him that, on the same day, three of his sons had been crowned as victors in the Olympian games.—See Dr. Stroud's treatise.

‡ The shut sac or bag by which the heart is surrounded and enclosed.

the human body in the same kind of bloody dew. Why, then, should not the agony of the Saviour's spirit on the cross—which we have every reason to regard as a renewal of that in the garden—have told upon his physical frame in a way equally analogous to other results verified by experience? Still, however, had we nothing more positive to go upon, it could only be regarded as a conjecture, a thing conceivable and quite possible, that Jesus had literally died of a broken heart. But that striking incident, upon the nature of which, and the singular testimony regarding it, we remarked in the close of the previous topic, puts positive evidence into our hands; and the precise weight of this evidence every recent inquiry into the condition of the blood within the human body after death has been helping us more accurately and fully to appreciate. Let me remind you, then, that within an hour or two after our Saviour's death, (it could not have been more,) what the skilful knife of the anatomist does upon the subject on which it operates, the Roman soldier's spear did upon the dead body of our Lord—it broadly and deeply pierced the side, and from the wound inflicted thus there flowed out blood and water; so much of both, and the water so distinguishable from the blood, as to attract the particular observation of John, who was standing a little way off. We cannot be wrong in fixing our attention upon a fact to which the beloved apostle so especially summons it in his gospel.

First, then, we have it now authenticated beyond reasonable doubt, that what John noticed, the copious outflow of water, is precisely what would have happened on the supposition that the heart of our Redeemer had been ruptured under the pressure of inward grief—is precisely what has been noticed in other instances of this form of death. When it escapes from the blood-vessels, whether that escape takes place within the body or without, human blood within a short time coagulates, its watery part separating slowly from its thicker substance. When rupture of the heart takes place, and the blood which that organ contains passes into the pericardium, it ere long undergoes this change; and, as the capsule into which it flows is large enough to contain many ounces' weight of liquid, if, when it is full, the heart be pierced, the contents escaping exhibit such a stream of mingled blood and water as the eye of John noticed as he gazed upon the cross. This is what the anatomist has actually witnessed; numerous instances existing in which the quantity and quality of the blood escaping from a ruptured heart have been carefully noted and recorded. Having satisfied ourselves as to these facts, from regarding it at first as but an ingenious supposition, we



feel constrained to regard it as in the highest degree probable that Christ our Saviour died this very kind of death. But what shuts us up to this conclusion is, that no other satisfactory explanation can be given of the outflow of blood and water from the Saviour's side. When not extravasated—that is, when allowed at death to remain in the vascular system—the blood of the human body rarely coagulates, and when it does, the coagulation, or separation into blood and water, does not take place till many hours after death. In rare instances—of persons dying from long-continued or extreme debility—the entire blood of the body has been found in a half watery condition; but our Saviour's death was not an instance of this kind, and even though it should be imagined that what long-continued illness did with others, agony of spirit did with him, inducing the same degree of debility, attended with all its ordinary physical results; this, which is the only other supposition that can be held as accounting to us for what John witnessed, fails in this respect, that, pierce when or how it might, it could only have been a few trickling drops of watery blood that the spear of the soldier could have extracted from the Redeemer's side. Inasmuch, then, as all other attempted explanations of the recorded incidents of our Redeemer's death are found to be at fault, and inasmuch as it corresponds with and explains them all, we rest in the belief that such was the bitter agony of the Redeemer's soul as he hung upon the cross, that—unstrengthened now by any angel from heaven, as during the agony in the garden, when but for that strengthening the same issue might have been realized—the heart of our Redeemer was broken, and in this way the tie that bound body and spirit together was dissolved.

But of what use is it to institute any such inquiry as that in which we have been engaged? or what gain would there be in winning for the conclusion arrived at a general assent? It might be enough to say here that, if reverently treated, there is no single incident connected with the life or death of our divine Redeemer, upon which it is possible that any light may be thrown, which does not solicit at our hands the utmost effort we can make fully and minutely to understand it. Even, then, though it should appear that no direct or practical benefit would attend the discovery and establishment of the true and proximate physical cause of the death of Christ, still we should regard the inquiry as one in itself too full of interest to refrain from prosecuting it. But would it not be wonderful, would it not correspond with other evidences of the truth of the gospel narrative which the progress of our knowledge has elimi-



nated, should it turn out to be true, as we believe it has done, that the accounts of the sufferings and death of Jesus, drawn up by four independent witnesses—all of them uninformed as to the true state of the case, and signally ignorant how that which they recorded might serve to reveal it—did, nevertheless, when brought together and minutely scrutinized, contain within them those distinct and decisive tokens which the advanced science of this age recognizes as indicative of a mode of death, so singular in its character, so rare in its occurrence, so peculiar in its physical effects?

— Would it not also give a new meaning to some of the expressions which in Psalms 69 and 22—the two psalms specially predictive of his sufferings and death—our Saviour is himself represented as employing? Read together the twentieth and twenty-first verses of Psalm 69: “Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” If the very kind of drink they were to offer him was not deemed unworthy of being specified in that ancient prophecy—the very smallness, in fact, of the incident making it serve all the better the purposes of the prophecy—need we wonder if it were only the literal truth which the speaker uttered when he said, “Reproach hath broken my heart”? When so much has turned out to be literally true, it is but ranking that expression with the others, when it also has that character assigned to it. Or take the fourteenth verse of Psalm 22: “I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.” Here, again, we feel that, if in other parts of that psalm—if in speaking of the shooting out of the lips, the shaking of the head, the words that were spoken, the parting of his garments, the casting of lots for his vesture—the great Sufferer is recognized as describing that which did afterwards actually occur, it is not surprising if, in describing his own bodily condition, in speaking, as he does, especially of the state of his heart, he should be speaking of that which also was actually realized.

But there are positive benefits attendant on the reception of that view of the Saviour’s death which I have now unfolded to you. It serves, I think, to spiritualize and elevate our conception of the sufferings of Calvary; it carries our thoughts away from the mere bodily endurances of the crucifixion; it concentrates them on that mysterious woe which agitated his spirit, till the very heart that beat within the body of the agonized Redeemer, under the powerful impulse of

those emotions which shook and wrung his soul, did burst and break. If the bloody sweat of the garden, and the broken heart of the cross, were naturally, directly, exclusively the results of those inward sorrows to which it pleased the Saviour to open his soul, that in the enduring of them he might bear our sins, then how little had man to do physically with the infliction of that agony wherein the great atonement lay! If we have read and interpreted aright the details of our Lord's sufferings in the garden and on the cross, these very details do of themselves throw into the background the corporeal part of the endurances, representing it in fact only as the appropriate physical appendix to that overwhelming sorrow, by which the spirit of the Redeemer was bowed down under the load of human guilt. This spiritual sorrow formed the body of that agony of which the corporeal was but the shadow and the sign.

From the very heart of the simple but most affecting records of Gethsemane and the cross there issues the voice of a double warning—a warning against any such estimate of the sufferings of the man Christ Jesus as would assimilate them to the common sorrows of suffering humanity. As a man there was nothing in all that he had to endure from man, which can in any way account for his sweat being as great drops of blood in the garden. In the rending of his heart upon the cross, his sufferings remain, even in their outward manifestations and results, inexplicable on any other supposition than that which attributes to them a vicarious character, representing them as borne by the incarnate Son of God, as the head and representative of his people. But while the very outward history of Gethsemane and the cross pleads thus strongly against any lowering of our estimate of the true character and design of Christ's sufferings, does it not as strongly and persuasively lift up its protest against those pictorial and sentimental representations of the Saviour in his agony and in his death, which make their appeal to a mere human sympathy, by dwelling upon and exaggerating the bodily endurances which were undergone? We approach these closing scenes of our Redeemer's life, we plant our footsteps in the neighborhood of the garden and the cross; and as we do so, we begin to feel that it is very sacred ground that we tread. We try to get nearer and nearer to the Great Sufferer, to look a little farther into the bosom of that exceeding sorrow of his troubled, oppressed, bewildered spirit. It is not long ere we become convinced, that in that sorrow there are elements we are altogether unable to compute and appreciate, and that our most becoming attitude, in presence of such a sufferer as this—the One through whose sufferings for us we look

for our forgiveness and acceptance with God—is one of childlike trust, devout adoring gratitude and love. It is too remote, too hidden a region this for us rashly to invade, in the hope, that with those dim lights which alone are in our hands, we shall be able to explore it. It is too sacred a region for the vulgar tread of a mere human curiosity, or the busy play of a mere human sympathy.

But what chiefly commends to us the view now given of the Redeemer's death, is its correspondence with all that the Scriptures teach as to the sacrificial character of that death—all that they tell us of the virtue of Christ's most precious blood. More clearly and immediately than any other does this view represent Christ's death as the proximate and natural result of the offering up of himself to God, the pouring out of his soul in the great sacrifice for sin. From the lips of the broken-hearted, these words seem fraught to us with a new significance, "No man taketh my life from me; I lay it down of myself,"—all, even to the very death of the body, being embraced in his entire willingness that there should be laid upon him the transgressions of us all. It was his soul, his life, that Jesus gave a ransom for many. The life was regarded as lying in the blood, and so it was the blood of the sacrificed animal that was sprinkled of old upon the door-posts, upon the altar, upon the mercy-seat—the atoning virtue regarded as accompanying the application of the blood; and so, lifting this idea up from the level of mere ceremonialism, we are taught that "without shedding of blood," without life given for life, "there is no remission;" and so, still farther pointing us to the one true sacrifice, we are told that not by the blood of bulls and goats, but by his own blood Christ has entered into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. It is the blood of Christ which "cleanseth us from all sin." It is the blood of Christ which "purges the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God." It is the blood of the covenant by which we are sanctified. We know, and desire ever to remember, that this is but a figurative expression; that the blood of Christ stands only as the type or emblem of the life that was given up to God for us. But the blood merely of a crucifixion does not fill up the type, does not put its full meaning into the figure. Crucifixion was not a bloody death, it was only a few trickling drops that flowed from the pierced hands and feet. But if, indeed, it was his very heart's blood which Jesus poured out in the act of giving up his life for us on Calvary, with what fuller and richer significance will that expression, "the blood of Jesus," fall upon the ear of faith! This, then, is he—his bleeding broken heart the witness to it—who came by water and by blood; not by water only, but





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by water and by blood. With minds afresh impressed by the thought how it was that the blood of Christ was shed; with hearts all full of gratitude and love, let us take up the words that the Spirit has put into our lips: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in thee;  
Let the water and the blood,  
From thy riven side that flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure,  
Cleanse me from its guilt and power."

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#### XIV.

#### THE BURIAL.\*

JOSEPH of Arimathea and Nicodemus were both rulers of the Jews, both members of the Sanhedrim—the Jewish council or court, composed of seventy members, in whose hands the supreme judicial power was lodged. It was the right and duty of both these men to have been present at the trial of our Lord on the morning of the crucifixion. In common with the other members of the Sanhedrim, they in all likelihood received the early summons to assemble in the hall of Caiaphas. It would seem, however, that they did not obey the call; that, knowing something beforehand of the object of the meeting, of the spirit and design of those who summoned it, they absented themselves. We infer this from the fact that when, after Christ's great confession, the high priest put the question, "What think ye?" to the council, they all condemned him to be guilty of death. But we are told of Joseph, that he had not "consented to the counsel and deed" of those by whom the arrest and condemnation of Jesus were planned and executed. In what way his dissent had been expressed we are not informed, but having somehow intimated it beforehand, it is altogether improbable that, without any demur on his part, he should have been a consenting party to the final sentence when pronounced. And neither had Nicodemus gone in with the course which his fellow-rulers had from the beginning pursued towards

\* John 19:38-42; Luke 23:55; Matt. 27:61.

Jesus. When the officers of the chief priests and Pharisees came back to their employers, their task unexecuted, giving as their reason for not having arrested Jesus, that "never man spake like this man," so provoked were those Pharisees at seeing such influence exerted by Jesus upon their own menial servants, that in the passion of the moment, they exclaimed, "Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people, who knoweth not the law, are cursed."

Perhaps the question about the rulers touched the conscience of Nicodemus, who was present on the occasion; perhaps he felt that it was not so true as they imagined, that none of the rulers believed on Jesus; perhaps he felt somewhat ashamed of himself and of the false position which he occupied. At any rate, the haughty and contemptuous tone of his brethren stirred him up for once to say a word. "Doth our law," said he to them, "judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" A very gentle and reasonable remonstrance, but one which had no other effect than turning against himself the wrath that had been expending itself upon their officials. "Art thou also," they say to him, "of Galilee?" Nicodemus cowered under that question, and the suspicion that it implied. Neither then nor afterwards did he say or do anything more which might expose him to the imputation of being a follower of Jesus; but we cannot think so ill of him as to believe that, beyond concealing whatever belief in Christ he cherished, he would have played the hypocrite so far as to let his voice openly be heard as one of those condemning our Lord to death.

Let us judge both these men as fairly and gently as we ourselves would desire to be judged. To what amount of enlightenment and belief as to the character and claims of Christ they had arrived previous to his decease, it were difficult to imagine. Both must have had a large amount of deep, inveterate Jewish prejudice to contend with in accepting the Messiahship of the Nazarene; not such prejudice alone as was common to the great mass of their countrymen, but such as had a peculiar hold on the more educated men of their time, when raised to be guides and rulers of the people. Over all this prejudice Joseph had already triumphed; there was a sincerity and integrity of judgment in him, an earnest spirit of faith and hope; he was a good man and a just; one who, like the aged Simeon, had been waiting for the kingdom of God, the better prepared to hail it in whatever guise it came. He had thus become really, though not openly or professedly, a disciple of Jesus. We do not know whether Nicodemus had got so far. We do know, however, that the very first

words and acts of Jesus at Jerusalem made the deepest and most favorable impression on his mind. It was at the very opening of our Lord's ministry, that this man came to Jesus by night. Instead of thinking of the covert way in which he came, only to find ground of censure in it, let us remember that he was the one and only ruler who did in any way come to Jesus; and that he came—as his very first words of salutation and inquiry showed—in the spirit of deep respect, and earnest desire for instruction. Let us remember, too, that without one word of blame escaping from our Lord's own lips, it was to this man that, at so early a period of his ministry, our Saviour made the clear and full disclosure of the great object of his own mission and death, preserved in the third chapter of the gospel by John; that it was to Nicodemus he spake of that new spiritual birth by which the kingdom was to be entered; that it was to Nicodemus he said, that as Moses had lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must He be lifted up: that it was to Nicodemus that the great saying was addressed, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Surely he who, up till near the close, was so chary of speaking about his death even to his own disciples, would not, at the very beginning of his ministry, have spoken thus to this ruler of the Jews, had he not perceived in him one willing and waiting to be taught. Christ must have seen some good soil in that man's heart, to have scattered there so much of the good seed. That seed was long of germinating, but it bore fruit at last, very pleasant for the eye to look upon.

It was the fault both of Joseph and Nicodemus, that they hid, as it were, their faces from Christ; that they were ashamed and afraid to confess him openly. But who shall tell us exactly what their state of mind, their faith and feeling toward him were; how much of hesitation both of them may—indeed, we may boldly say must—have felt as to many things about Jesus which they could in no way harmonize with their conceptions of the Great Prophet that was to arise? "Search and look," his brother councillors had said to Nicodemus, at that time when he had ventured to interpose the question which provoked them—"search and look; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." Nicodemus had nothing to say to that bold assertion; nothing to say, we may well believe, to many an objection taken to the pretensions of the Son of the Galilean carpenter. In common with Joseph, he may have believed; but both together may have been quietly waiting till some further and more distinct manifestations of his Messiahship were made by Christ. But why did they



not, so far as they did believe in him, openly acknowledge it? Why did they not feel rebuked by that poor man, blind from his birth, dragged for examination before them, who witnessed in their presence so good a confession? It was because they knew so well that their brother rulers had agreed that, "if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue." It was because they knew so well and felt so keenly what to them that excommunication would involve: for it was no slight punishment among the Jews to be expelled from the synagogue; it involved in its extreme issue consequences far more disastrous than a mere ban of admission into their religious assemblies; it involved loss of station, separation from kindred and the society of their fellow-men. To the poor blind beggar upon whom it actually was passed, that doom may have fallen but lightly; for he had never known much of that of which this doom was to deprive him. A very different thing this expulsion from the synagogue would have been to Joseph and to Nicodemus. Let us not judge these men too harshly for the reluctance they showed to brave it; let us rather try to put ourselves exactly in their position, that we may sympathize with the hesitation which they felt in making any open acknowledgment of their attachment to Christ.

His death, however, at once put an end to that hesitation in both their breasts. They may not have been present at the crucifixion. They would not well have known where to take their station, or how to comport themselves there. They could not have joined in the mockery, nor were they prepared to exhibit themselves as friends of the Crucified. But though not spectators of the tragedy, they were somewhere in the immediate neighborhood, waiting anxiously to learn the issue. Could they, members of the same Sanhedrim, thrown often into contact, witnesses of each other's bearing and conduct, as to all the steps which had been taken against Jesus, have remained ignorant of each other's secret leanings toward the persecuted Nazarene? Was it by chance that they met together at the cross, to act in concert there? We would rather believe that, attracted by the tie of a common sympathy with Jesus, the sad news of his being taken out to Golgotha to be crucified brought them that forenoon together; that they were by each other's side as the tidings reached them of all the wonders which had transpired around the cross, and of the strange death which Jesus died. The resolution of both is promptly taken; and it looks, certainly, as if taken with the knowledge of each other's purpose. Joseph goes at once boldly to Pilate, and craves the body of Jesus. An ancient prophecy, of which he knew nothing—one that seemed, as Jesus died, most unlikely of accomplish-

ment—had proclaimed that he was to make his grave with the rich. This rich man has a new sepulchre, wherein never man lay, which he had bought or got hewn out of the rock, with the idea, perhaps, that he might himself be the first to occupy it. It lies there close at hand, not many paces from the cross. He is resolved to open it, that it may receive, as its first tenant, the body of the Crucified. Nay, further; as there are few, if any, now of Christ's known friends to undertake the task, he is resolved—his dignity, the sense of shame, the fear of the Jews, all forgotten—to put his own hands to the office of giving that body the most honorable sepulture that the time and circumstances can afford.

Once assured, on the centurion's testimony, that it was even as Joseph said, Pilate at once gives the order that the body shall be committed into his hands. The centurion, bearing that order, returns to Golgotha. Joseph provides himself by the way with the clean white cloth in which to shroud the body. The soldiers, at their officer's command, bear the bodies of the other two away, leaving that of Jesus still suspended on the cross: It is there when Joseph reaches the spot, to be dealt with as he likes. How quiet and how lonely the place, as the first preparations are made for the interment! few to help, and none to interrupt. The crowd has all dispersed; some half-dozen Galilean women alone remain. But is John not here? He had returned to Calvary, had seen but a little while before the thrust of the soldier's spear; he knew that but a short time was left for disposing of the body. Is it at all likely that in such circumstances he should leave, and not wait to see the close? Let us believe that though, with his accustomed modesty, he has veiled his presence, he was present standing with those Galilean women. They see, coming in haste, this Joseph of Arimathea, whom none of them had ever known as a disciple of their Master; they see the white linen cloth that he has provided; they notice that the body is committed to his charge; they watch with wonder as he puts forth his own hand to the taking down of the body. Their wonder grows as Nicodemus—also a stranger to them, whom they had never seen coming to Jesus—joins himself to Joseph; not rudely and roughly, as the soldiers had dealt with the others, but gently and reverently handling the dead. As they lay the body on the ground, it appears that this new-comer, Nicodemus, has brought with him a mixture of powdered myrrh and aloes, about one hundred pounds' weight. The richest man in Jerusalem could not have furnished more or better spicery for the burial of his dearest friend. It is evident that these two men have it in their heart, and are ready to put to their hands, to treat the dead

with all due respect. Their fears disarmed, assured of the friendly purpose of those interposing thus, the Galilean women gather in around the pale and lifeless form. The white shroud is ready, the myrrh and the aloes are at hand, but who shall spread those spices on the funeral garment, and wrap it round the corpse to fit it for the burial? This is a service, one of the last and the saddest which our poor humanity needs, which, as if by an instinct of nature, woman's gentle hand has in all ages and in all countries been wont to render to the dead; and though the gospel narrative be silent here, we will not believe that it was otherwise at the cross; we will not believe but that it was the tender hands of those loving women who had watched at Calvary from morning-tide till now, which offer their aid, and are permitted and honored to wipe from that mutilated form the bloody marks of dishonor which it wore, to swathe it with the pure linen robe, and wrap around the thorn-marked brow the napkin, so falsely deemed to be the last clothing of the dead.

One thing alone is wanting, that the manner of the Jews in burying may be observed—a bier to lay the body on, to bear it to the sepulchre. There has been no time to get one, or it is felt that the distance is so short that it is not needed. That body has, however, the best bier of all—the hands of true affection, to lift it up and carry it across to the new tomb which waits to receive it. The feet let us assign to Joseph, the body to Nicodemus, and that regal head with those closed eyes, over which the shadows of the resurrection are already flitting, let us lay it on the breast of the beloved disciple. The brief path from the cross to the sepulchre is soon traversed. In silence and in deep sorrow they bear their sacred burden, and lay it gently down upon its clean, cold rocky bed. The last look of the dead is taken. The buriers reverently withdraw, the stone is rolled to the mouth of the sepulchre: separated from the living—Jesus rests with the dead—

“At length the worst is o’er, and thou art laid  
 Deep in thy darksome bed;  
 All still and cold behind yon dreary stone  
 Thy sacred form is gone.  
 Around those lips where peace and mercy hung  
 The dew of death hath clung;  
 The dull earth o’er thee, and thy friends around,  
 Thou sleep’st a silent corse, in funeral-raiment wound.”

The burial is over now, and we might depart; but let us linger a little longer, and bestow a parting look on the persons and the place, the buriers and the burying-ground. The former have been few in number; what they have to do, they must do quickly; for the sun is

down in the western sky when Joseph gets the order from Pilate; and before it sets, before the great Sabbath begins, they must lay Jesus in the grave. Yet hurried as they have been, with all such honor as they can show, with every token of respect, have they laid that body in the tomb; they have done all they could. The last service which Jesus ever needed at the hands of men it has been their privilege to render. And for the manner in which they have rendered it, shall we not honor them? Yes, verily, wherever this gospel of the kingdom shall be made known, what they thus did for the Lord's burial shall be told for a memorial of them; and henceforth we shall forget of Joseph that hitherto he had concealed his discipleship, and acted as if he were a stranger to the Lord, seeing that, when Christ was in such a special sense a stranger on the earth, he opened his own new sepulchre to take him in; and we shall forget it of Nicodemus that it was by night he had come to Jesus, seeing that, upon this last sad day he came forth so openly, with his costly offering of myrrh and aloes, to embalm Christ for his burial. Of the Galilean women we have nothing to forget; but let this be the token wherewith we shall remember them, that, the last at the cross and the first at the sepulchre, they were the latest at the grave: for Joseph has departed; Nicodemus and the rest are gone; but there, while the sun goes down, and the evening shadows deepen around, the very solitude and gloom of the place such as might have warned them away—there are Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to be seen sitting over against the sepulchre, unable to tear themselves from the spot, gazing through their tears at the place where the body of their Lord is laid.

Let us now bestow a parting look upon the burying-ground. "In the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in that garden a sepulchre." Plant yourselves before that sepulchre, and look around. This is no place for graves; here rise around you no memorials of the dead. You see but a single sepulchre, and that sepulchre in a garden. Strange mingling this of opposites, the garden of life and growth and beauty, circling the sepulchre of death, corruption, and decay. Miniature of the strange world we live in. What garden of it has not its own grave? Your path may, for a time, be through flowers and fragrance; follow it far enough, it leads ever to a grave. But this sepulchre in this garden suggests other and happier thoughts. It was in a garden once of old—in Eden, that death had his first summons given, to find there his first prey; it is in a garden here at Calvary, that the last enemy of mankind has the death-blow given to him—that the great conqueror



is in his turn overcome. Upon that stone which they rolled to the mouth of the sepulchre, let us engrave the words, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." What a change it has made in the character and aspect of the grave, that our Saviour himself once lay in it! He has stripped it of its terrors, and to many a weary one given it an attractive rather than a repulsive look. "I heard a voice from heaven saying"—it needed a voice from heaven to assure us of the truth—"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." To such the grave is, indeed, a bed of blessed rest. Buried with Jesus, they repose till the hour of the great awakening cometh, when with him they shall arise to that newness of life over which no shadow of death shall ever pass.

# THE FORTY DAYS

AFTER

## OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION.

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### I.

#### THE RESURRECTION.\*

WE left Mary Magdalene and the other Mary keeping their lonely watch over against the sepulchre till the sun of Friday sets. At its setting, Saturday, the great Sabbath of the passover, begins. Such a Sabbath never dawned upon this world before or since. All things wear an outward look of quiet in Jerusalem. A great calm, a deeper than Sabbath stillness, has followed the stir and excitement of those strange scenes at Golgotha. Crowds of silent worshippers fill as usual the courts of the temple; and all goes on, at the hours of the morning and evening sacrifice, as it had done for hundreds of years gone by. But can those priests, who minister within the Holy Place, gaze without some strange misgivings upon the rent in the veil from top to bottom, which yesterday they had seen so strangely made, and which they scarce had time imperfectly to repair? Can they think without dismay of that rude uncovering of all the hidden mysteries of the most Holy Place, which they had witnessed? Among the crowds of worshippers without, there are friends and followers of Jesus. They would have been here had nothing happened to their Master the day before, and they are here now, for by keeping away they might draw suspicion upon themselves; but what heart have they for the services of the sanctuary? They have just had all their brightest earthly hopes smitten to the dust; and so prostrate are they beneath the stroke, that they cannot even recall to memory, that but a few months before, Jesus had, more than once, distinctly told them that he must go up to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests, and be killed, and be raised again the

third day. No writer of a fictitious story, no framer of religious myths, had he previously put into Christ's lips such distinct foretellings of his death and resurrection, would have attributed to his followers such an entire forgetfulness of these predictions, such an utter prostration of all faith and hope, as that which the evangelists describe as coming upon all our Lord's disciples immediately after his death, lasting till the most extraordinary means were taken to remove them, and yielding slowly then. Yet, after all, is it not true to human nature, that upon the minds and hearts of those simple, rude, uncultivated men and women, filled as they had been with other and quite different expectations, the shock of such a shameful death, coming in such a way upon their Master, was so sudden and so stunning, that all power of forming a new conception of their Master's character, and taking up a new faith in him, was gone; the power even of remembering what he had said about himself beforehand for the season paralyzed?

But love lives on, even where faith dies out, among those disconsolate and utterly hopeless friends and followers of our Lord. While the two Marys had remained throughout the preceding day before the sepulchre, others of those Galilean women had hastened to occupy the short space between the burial and the sunset, in beginning their preparations for the embalming of their Master's body. And these, with the two Marys, are waiting now, not without impatience; for their hearts, not in the temple services, have gone where they have seen him laid—till the sunset, the close of the Sabbath, enables them to have all the needed wrappings, and spices, and ointments prepared, so that when the third morning dawns they may go out to Golgotha, to finish there at leisure what Joseph and Nicodemus had more hurriedly and imperfectly attempted, before they laid Jesus in the sepulchre.

But how, throughout this intervening Sabbath, fares it with the chief priests and rulers? Are they quite at ease; content and happy; satisfied with, if not glorying in, their success? They have got rid of this obnoxious man; he is dead and buried. What fear can there be of him now? What risk or danger to them, or to their supremacy, can come out of his grave? May they not bury all their apprehensions in that closed sepulchre? No; a ghastly fear comes in to mar the joy of a gratified revenge. They dread that dead man still; he rules their spirits from his sepulchre. They would not cross Herod's threshold the day before, lest they should be defiled. They could not bear the thought that Jesus should hang suspended on the cross throughout the Sabbath-day; it would disturb, it would desecrate

the services of the holy day, the Holy Place. But they scruple not to desecrate the Sabbath by their jealous fears ; by their secret councils ; by their plannings to prevent a future, dreaded danger. And so, no sooner is the Sabbath over, than they hasten to the governor, saying to him : " Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again." They had themselves heard him, at the very beginning of his ministry, say publicly : " Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it again." They had heard him at a later period say : " An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign ; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas : for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Was it to these vague and general sayings of our Lord that the rulers now referred ? It is more likely that they had in view some of those more recent and more explicit declarations of Jesus to his own disciples, such as the one already quoted, or such as that other and still more explicit one, when he took his disciples apart by the way, as they were going up to Jerusalem, and said to them, " Behold, we go up to Jerusalem ; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him : and the third day he shall rise again." What more natural than that the betrayer himself, to whose act such special allusion was thus made, should, in some of his communications with the rulers, have repeated to them those memorable words ? They now remember, while the disciples themselves forget. They fear, while the disciples have ceased to hope. When first reported to them, they had mocked at the unmeaning words ; but now that so much of the prophecy has been accomplished, they begin to dread lest somehow or other the remainder of it should also be fulfilled. As yet all was safe ; it was not till the third day that he was to rise again. During that Sabbath-day the body of the Crucified was secure enough in the sepulchre ; the very sanctity of the day a sufficient guard against any attempt to invade the tomb. But instant means must be taken that thereafter there be no tampering with the place of burial. No night-guard could they get so good as a company of Roman soldiers whose iron rule of discipline imposed death upon the sentinel who slept at his post. Such guard they could get stationed at the sepulchre only under the governor's sanction. " Command, therefore," they said to Pilate, " that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the



people, He is risen from the dead : so the last error shall be worse than the first." Little heeding either the first or the last error, having no sympathy with their idle fears about the rifling of the sepulchre, in no good humor either with himself or with the rulers, yet, since he had gone so far to please them, not caring to refuse their last request, Pilate complies. "Ye have a watch," he says ; 'a detachment of my soldiers placed at your disposal during the feast, use it as you please ; go your way, and, with its help, make the sepulchre of that poor innocent Nazarene you got me to crucify, as sure as ye can.' And they went their way. They passed a cord across the stone which filled the entrance into the sepulchre, and fastened it at each end to the adjoining rock with the sealing clay, so that the stone could not be removed and replaced, however carefully, in its first position, without leaving behind a mark of the disturbance. And they placed the sentinels, with the strict command that they were to suffer no man in the darkness to meddle with that sepulchre ; and thus, securely guarded, the dead body of the Redeemer reposes

The darkness deepens round the sepulchre, the sentinels kindle their night-lamps, and pace to and fro before it. The midnight hour has passed ; it is yet dark. The day has but begun to dawn, when those women, whose wakeful love sends them forth on their early errand, leave the holy city to go out to Calvary to complete there the interrupted embalming. They are already near the spot, when a difficulty, not thought of till then, occurs to them. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? That stone which they had seen two nights before closely fitted into its place, was too large, too firmly embedded in its place, for their weak hands to move, and at this hour, and at that spot, what aid of stronger hands can they obtain? Another difficulty there was ; but of it happily they were ignorant, or it might have stopped their movement altogether. Of that sealing of the stone, of that guard planted the preceding day before the sepulchre, they had heard nothing, else they might have put to one another the further question, How, with such guard before it, shall we ever get access to the grave? It is as they are communing with one another by the way, that the earth quakes, and the angel descends from heaven, and rolls the stone back from the door of the sepulchre, and, having done this service for the embalmers, sits down upon it, waiting their approach. Was it then that the great event of that morning took place? Was it as the angel's hand rolled back the stone, and opened the entrance of the tomb, that the Great Redeemer of mankind awoke, arose, and stepped forth from his temporary rest among the

dead? It is not said so. The keepers did not witness the resurrection. They saw the angel, the light of his countenance, the snowy radiance of his raiment, and for fear of him they became as dead men. But they saw not the Lord himself come forth. The angel himself may not have witnessed the resurrection. He did not say he had. He speaks of it as an event already past. It may not have been as a spectator or minister to his Lord, in the act of rising from the dead, that he was sent down from heaven. The Lord of life needed not that service which he came to render. Through that stone door he could have passed as easily as he passed afterwards through other doors which barred not his entrances nor his exits. Altogether secret, the exact time and manner of the event unnoticed and unknown was that great rising from the dead. The clearest and amplest proof was afterwards given of the fact that, some time between sunset of the last and sunrise of the first day of the week, the resurrection had taken place; but it pleased not the Lord who then arose to do so under the immediate eye or inspection of any human witness.

Alarmed by the quaking of the ground beneath their feet, bewildered by the strange light which is seen streaming forth from beside the sepulchre, the women enter the garden, approach the sepulchre, gather courage as they see that the stone is already rolled away, but might have sunk again in terror as they looked at him who sat upon that stone, had he not prevented their fears by saying to them, in tones, let us believe, full of soothing power: "Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified"—"I know the errand that you come on. I know that it is love to the Crucified which brings you, thus early, to what was once his grave; and I have tidings of him that such love as yours will delight to hear. True, all that labor of yours about these spices and ointments is lost; you will find here nobody to embalm. But not lost is this visit to the sepulchre; for to you first, among all his followers, have I to tell: "He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay;" and he led them into the sepulchre.

"Come, see the place where the Lord lay." How little did the angel who first uttered these words, and heard the echo of them die away among the recesses of the rocky garden—how little, perhaps, did he think that the invitation which he thus gave to those few trembling women who stood before him, would be conveyed down through all after times, and be borne to the ears of millions upon millions of the followers of Jesus Christ. And yet it has been even so, and in the course of its long descent and wide circula-

tion, it has reached even unto us. Let us listen to and obey it. Come, let us look at the place where the Lord once lay, and from which on that third morning he arose.

We cannot indeed literally accept the angelic invitation, and go and look into the empty sepulchre. The hand of time, and in this instance the still rougher hands of the devotee and of the infidel, have wrought such changes in that sacred neighborhood, that the exact site of the holy sepulchre cannot be identified. But though we may not be able to plant our footsteps on the very ground that the trembling women occupied, or follow them as, angel led, they passed into the deserted tomb, yet in thought we may still bend over the place where the Lord once lay.

As we do so, let us reflect upon the proofs of the divine mission of the Redeemer afforded by his resurrection from the grave. Evidence enough had been afforded by our Lord himself, during his lifetime, of his divine character and authority. The words he spake, the works he did, proclaimed him to be the Son of the Highest. But sufficient as it was to convince the candid, that evidence had not been sufficient to silence the cavillers. His words were misunderstood and misinterpreted; his miracles, though not denied, were attributed to Satanic agency. It was as a blasphemer that he was put to death. But his resurrection appears at least to have had this effect, it stopped the mouths of his adversaries. There might be a few among the more credulous of them who accepted the clumsy tale that the chief priests tried to circulate about his disciples coming by night and taking the body away. But loudly and publicly as, both in the heart of Jerusalem and elsewhere, the apostles proclaimed this fact in the presence of the rulers themselves, it does not appear that its reality was ever openly challenged, or that any such attempt was made to explain it away as had been made regarding other miracles wrought by the Saviour's hands. If it failed to convince, it succeeded at least in silencing those who would, if they could, have dealt with it in a like manner.

It had indeed the force of a double miracle. Alone, and by itself, the rising of Jesus from the dead most fully authenticated the claims he had put forth. Had the Son of Mary not been all that he had declared himself to be, never would such an exercise of the Divine power have been put forth on his behalf. But more than this, Christ had publicly perilled his reputation as the Christ of God, on the occurrence of this event. When challenged to give some sign in support of his pretensions, it was to his future resurrection from the dead, and to it alone, that he appealed. Often, as we have seen, and



that in terms incapable of misconstruction, had our Lord foretold his resurrection. It carried thus along with it a triple proof of the divinity of our Lord's mission. It was the fulfilment of a prophecy, as well as the working of a miracle; that miracle wrought, and that prophecy fulfilled, in answer to a solemn and confident appeal made beforehand by Christ to this event as the crowning testimony to his Messiahship.

But not yet have we exhausted the testimony which the resurrection of Jesus embodies. He spoke of that resurrection as the raising of himself by himself. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. I lay down my life, that I may take it again. I have power to lay it down; I have power to take it again." An assumption by Jesus Christ of a power proper to the Creator alone; a clothing of himself with the high prerogative of the giver and the restorer of life. His actual resurrection, did it not in the most solemn manner ratify that assumption, convincing us by an instance of the highest kind, that whatsoever thing the Father doeth, the same doeth the Son likewise?

But further still—and it is this which attaches such importance to this incident in the history of our Redeemer, and causes it to be spoken of in the New Testament Scriptures as standing in such close connection with all our dearest hopes as to the life beyond the grave—in the resurrection of the Saviour, the seal of the Divine acceptance and approval was put upon that great work of service and of sacrifice, of atonement and of obedience in our room and stead, which Jesus finished on the cross. The expression and embodiment of that acceptance and approval in a visible act, an outward and palpable incident, give an aid and a security to our faith in Christ for our acceptance with God, far beyond that which any bare announcement in words could possibly have conveyed. Can we wonder, then, at the prominence given, in the teachings and writings of the apostles of our Lord, to an event so full of convincing evidence, so rich in spiritual instruction and comfort? To be a witness to this great event was held—as the election of Matthias informs us—to be the special function of the apostolic office. It was to this event that Peter referred at large in his discourse to the multitude on the day of Pentecost. "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." Questioned, a short time afterwards, before the Sanhedrim, as to the earliest of the apostolic miracles, "Be it known," said Peter, "unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand before you whole."



When Paul addressed the men of Athens, this was the one supernatural incident to which in the way of attestation, he referred: "God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance, in that he hath raised him from the dead." I have but to refer to the fifteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, to remind you of the place and prominence given to the event by the great apostle of the Gentiles: "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain."

From the first, it was to that crowning miracle of Christianity that its teachers made appeal. And now once more, in our own times, it is by that event that we desire that the entire question of the supernaturalism of our religion should be decided; for if that event be true, then any, then all other miracles are at least credible, for where among them shall a greater than this be found? If that event be true, then upon it does the entire fabric of our Christian faith securely rest; for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, then are we prepared along with this, and as harmonizing with this, to believe all that the Scriptures have taught us of the glory of Christ's person, as one with, and equal to the Father; all that they have taught us of the design of his life and death among us, as the Redeemer of our souls from death—the giver, the infuser, the nourisher, the maturer of that eternal life which is for our souls in him. Let us then be devoutly grateful for it, that our faith in him—in knowledge of whom, in union with whom standeth our eternal life—has such a solid foundation of fact to rest upon—a foundation so firmly embedded among all those other foundations upon which our knowledge of the past reposes, that to unsettle, to overturn it, you must unsettle, must overturn them all.

"Come, see the place where the Lord lay," that you may contemplate him, the one and only instance which this world hath witnessed of the last enemy, Death, being fairly met—met in his own territory, triumphed over in his own domain, by the use of his own weapons. That grim, inexorable tyrant, wealth has never bribed, tears have never softened, beauty has never moved as he made his unfaltering approach, and struck his unerring blow. To and fro, wide over the vast field of humanity, has that sheer, cold scythe been ever swaying, and generation after generation has it laid low in the dust. Two only out of the many millions of our race—two in olden time were snatched away before the stroke of the destroyer came upon them, and passed away without tasting death. But the translation of Enoch and Elijah was no victory over death; they never met, they

never grappled with this foe; they were withdrawn from the battle-field before the day of conflict came. Some there were, too, in after times, who, subject for a season to the dominion of death, were delivered from its sway; but neither was theirs the victory, for they had to return again, and bow once more beneath the yoke of the great conqueror. The widow's son, the ruler's daughter, and Lazarus whom Jesus loved, lie low as others in the caverns of the dead. One alone of human form ever grappled with that strong wrestler Death, and cast him from him overcome. His way to conquest lay through brief submission. Like others, he descended into the dark and dreary prison-house. The grave opened to receive him. He seemed to have passed away as the multitudes who had gone before. But death and the grave never received such a visitant into their silent and vast domains. He approached the throne of the tyrant, to wrench the sceptre of empire from his hand. In bursting, as he did, the barriers of the grave, it was no mere respite that he obtained for himself, but a full and final victory. He bade adieu that morning to the sepulchre for ever. He left no trophy behind; nothing of his in the hands of death; nothing but that empty sepulchre to tell that he had once, and for a short season, been under the hold of the destroyer. Even had this been a solitary conquest, though the sepulchre of Jesus were to remain for ever as the only one from which the tenant came forth alive, to return to it no more—still would we draw near to muse upon this one triumph of humanity over the last enemy.

But we have all a nearer, a more special interest in this deserted tomb of Jesus Christ. His was no solitary, isolated victory over the grave. For us he died, and for us he rose again. Firm and fast as the grave now seems to hold the buried generations of our race, it is now doomed, as a fruit of Christ's resurrection, to relax its grasp, and yield them up again. Empty as was Joseph's sepulchre when the angel stood before it and invited the women to enter, so empty shall one day be every grave of earth, when another angel shall sound his trumpet, and it shall ring through all the regions of the dead, and stir all to life again. Blessed was that morning which dawned upon the empty tomb at Calvary, but more blessed to us shall that other morning be which shall dawn upon all the emptied graves of earth, if only now we live in Christ; if at death we sleep in Jesus; if at that resurrection we be numbered with those who shall share the resurrection of the just.

## II.

## APPEARANCE TO MARY MAGDALENE.\*

IN relating the incidents of the resurrection, St. Matthew tells us that it was Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, who, as the first day of the week began to dawn, went out to the sepulchre. St. Mark mentions Salome as having accompanied them. St. Luke introduces the additional name of Joanna. St. John speaks of Mary Magdalene, and of her only. On the supposition that a number of those women who came with Jesus from Galilee had agreed to complete as early as possible the embalming of his body, and that they had either started together from the city, or, being in different parts of it the night before, had fixed to meet at early dawn at the sepulchre, we can readily enough understand that each of the four independent narrators might name one or more of them without specifying the others. Looking, however, a little more closely into the four separate accounts, we notice that, according to Matthew, the women on their arrival found the stone removed from the entrance of the sepulchre, and an angel sitting upon it, who invited them to enter and look at the place where the Lord had lain. Mark, making no allusion to any vision of an angel without, says that they passed into the sepulchre, and, on entering, saw "a young man sitting at the right side, clothed in a long white garment," who addressed to them nearly the same words which Matthew puts into the mouth of the angel seen sitting upon the stone. Luke tells us that, finding the stone rolled away, they entered in and found the sepulchre empty, and as they stood perplexed at the discovery, "behold, two men stood by them in shining garments," and spoke to them in terms and in a tone differing considerably from that attributed to the single angel by the first two evangelists. It appears again, from the narrative of John, that Mary Magdalene had seen no angel, had heard at least no announcement that the Lord was actually alive, when she hurried off from the sepulchre in search of Peter and John. What are we to make of these discrepancies? Was it sometimes one and sometimes two angels that appeared; were some eyes opened and some eyes shut to the angelic visions? Was it one visit, or two, or more, by the same or different groups of women, which were paid to the sepulchre? Various attempts to answer such questions have been made; various suppositions have been framed, the adoption of which, it has

\* John 20 : 1-18.

been thought, would relieve the different accounts from conflicting with one another; various modes of interlacing them, so as to form out of them a continuous and consistent narrative, have been presented. If it cannot be said that they have all absolutely failed, it must be said that not one of them is entirely satisfactory. We cannot doubt that if all the minor and connecting links were in our hands, we should be able to explain what now seems to be obscure, to harmonize what now seems to be conflicting; but in the absence of such knowledge, we must be content to take what each writer tells us, and regard it as the broken fragment of a whole, all the parts of which are not in our hands, so that we can put them connectedly together. But is not this fragmentary character of each of these four separate accounts just what we might have expected, considering the time and manner of the events narrated—the obscure light, the women coming, it may have been singly, or in different groups by different routes, the surprise, the terror, the running in and out, to and from the city—all this within the compass of an hour or two? Which one of the spectators or actors in these busy and broken movements, if asked afterwards to detail what occurred, but might have given an account of it differing from that of all the others? And if any two of these independent sources of information were applied to or made use of, how readily might apparent contradictions emerge upon the face of the narratives that were afterwards preserved. We do not know from what particular sources Matthew, Mark, and Luke derived their information. This special interest, however, attaches to the narrative of John—it is partly that of an eye-witness, and partly drawn, we cannot doubt, from what was told him by Mary Magdalene herself. Overlooking the part taken by all the other women, John confines himself exclusively to her. Even as our Lord himself singled her out from among the women who had ministered to him, to make to her his first appearance after his resurrection, so does the beloved disciple speak of her alone while he details to us the incidents of that wonderful manifestation.

We feel as if a great injustice had been done to Mary Magdalene, in identifying her with the woman who was a sinner, who anointed the Lord's feet with ointment, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. The name of that woman is not mentioned in the record of the incident in which she took so prominent a part. The incident occurred not in Magdala but at Nain. It was after Christ had left Nain that the first mention of this Mary meets us in the gospel narrative: "And it came to pass afterwards, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the



kingdom of God; and the twelve were with him, and certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance." Named thus along with one whose husband held an important office in Herod's household, named as one of those who ministered to our Lord of their substance, Mary Magdalene does not appear to have been a woman of a low or poor condition. Neither have we any right to ground upon the fact that seven devils had been east out of her, the conclusion that she had been a woman of depraved or dissolute habits. Satanic possession carried then no more evidence along with it of previous immorality, than insanity would do now among ourselves.

But whoever, whatever this Mary was, she was, as we have already seen, one of the latest at the sepulchre on the evening of the burial, and now she is one of the earliest at that sepulchre on the morning of the resurrection. Perhaps, more eager than the rest, she had hurried on before, and entered the garden alone. A quick glance, that waited not to catch even the sight of the angel's form, had shown her that the entrance was open, and the sepulchre empty. Overwhelmed with sorrow at the sight; waiting not to hear the angel's intimation that He had risen; leaping at once to the conclusion that hostile hands had rifled the sacred tomb, her troubled fancy picturing to her the indignities to which that form, beloved even in its lifelessness, might have been subjected—Mary hurries back to the city. She seeks the house to which John had carried the mother of our Lord. She finds there both John and that other apostle, whom a strange attraction has drawn now to John's side. She has but breath enough to say, "They have taken away the Lord, and we know not where they have laid him." Her eagerness of alarm passes, by sympathy, into the hearts of the two apostles. They arise to run out together to the sepulchre. John's lighter footstep, quickened by his more ardent, more unburdened love, carries him soonest to the spot; but, at the entrance, his deep and reverential spirit holds him back in awe. He stops, and bends, and looks into the grave. Peter, of slower step, and still laboring, it may have been, under the burden of self-reproach, is behind John in the race; but, bolder or more impetuous, he stops not at the door, but, passing John, goes at once into the sepulchre. He draws his brother apostle after him, the one never dreaming of the influence he thus exerts, the other as little thinking of the influence he obeys. Both are now within, and have leisure to look round upon the place. There the linen clothes are lying, with

which Joseph and Nicodemus had swathed the body, and there, not loosely flung upon them in a disordered heap, but carefully folded up in a place by itself, lies that napkin which Mary herself may have helped to bind around the thorn-marked brow. Who had arranged them thus? Was it the hand of the great Sleeper himself, on his awakening within the tomb? or was it some angel's hand that took the death garments as they dropped from around the risen one, and thus disposed them? Whoever did it, there had been no haste; all had been done calmly, collectedly. Neither earthly friends nor earthly foes had done it: the one would not have stripped the garments from the body; the other would have been at no pains so carefully to arrange and deposit them. Peter, as he looks, is amazed, but his amazement shapes itself into no connected thought; he departs wondering in himself at that which had come to pass. John's quieter and deeper reflection suggests at once the idea that what has taken place is not a removal, but a reanimation of the body. An incipient faith in the resurrection forms within his breast; a faith grounded, not as it might have been, and should have been, on what he had already read or heard—for as yet neither he nor any of the apostles knew from the Scripture, nor believed from Christ's own word, that he must rise again from the dead—but grounded simply on what he saw, and especially upon the singular condition which the interior of the sepulchre displayed. That rising faith John kept to himself; he never boasted that he was the first of all the twelve to believe in the resurrection. Perhaps his first public mention of the fact was when, so many years afterwards, he sat down to write that gospel which bears his name.

The brief inspection of the empty sepulchre over—there being nothing more to see or learn—John and Peter return silent and sad to their own home. Mary Magdalene had followed them, as best she could, in the running out to the sepulchre; but she does not join them in their return. Two evenings before, (when all but she and the other Mary had left the tomb into which she had seen the body borne for burial,) she had clung to it to the last, and this morning, she clings to it still. The Master whom she had lost had rendered her the greatest of services; had been to her the kindest and best of friends. Her grateful love had clung to him while living; and now this love, living in her sorrow, makes her cling, even when John has left it, to the spot where in death he had reposed. Mary Magdalene, standing alone weeping thus before the empty sepulchre, presents herself to our eye as the saddest and most inconsolable of all the mourners for the Crucified. As she weeps, she stoops to take

another look into the deserted place. She sees a sight that might well have diverted her from her grief—two angels sitting, the one at the head, the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. They say to her, “Woman, why weepest thou?” Did you ever read of a more absorbing grief than that she, who was addressed thus by angels, should have no surprise, no astonishment to spare; but, as if unheeding who they were that spoke to her, should, out of the depths of her engrossing sorrow, only be able to repeat what she had said to Peter and John, varying the phrase a little—claiming a closer property in the departed—“Because they have taken away *my Lord*, and I know not where they have laid him.” And she turns away, even from an interview with angels, from converse with those who may have had as their purpose in putting to her that question, to tell her about her risen Lord. She turns away even from them, to weep out, without further interruption, her most bitter grief.

But now, from other lips, the same question, “Woman, why weepest thou?” salutes her ear. She sees, but scarcely notices, the person who thus speaks to her. He is not directly before her, and she cares not to turn, or make any minute scrutiny of his person. Even had she done so, seeing him through the veil of dropping tears, she might have failed to recognise him. She cares as little, in fact, about who this speaker is, as she had cared about who those angels were. Taking him to be one who did not need to be told why she wept, who must know all about what had happened—the gardener of the place—she says to him, in the simplest, most artless way, “Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.” She is willing even to believe that it was with no unkindly purpose he had been removed. Only let her know where he is; and, all forgetful how unfit her weak hands were for such a task, she says, “I will take him away.” ‘If it be an offence that he lies here in this rich man’s tomb, so near the holy city, I will bear him away to some remoter burial-place, where he may lie in peace, and where I may go and weep at will over his grave.’

Jesus saith unto her, “*Mary*.” The old familiar voice! It can be only He who names her so. Instantly—fully—the revelation of his living presence bursts upon her. She turns, and forgetting all about the new strange circumstances in which she sees him, as if the former days of their familiar intercourse had returned, she says, “Rabboni!” and stretches forth her hands to him. Jesus stops the movement. “Touch me not,” he says, “for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.” This check upon



the ardor of Mary's affectionate approach in the first moments of recognition, we can only understand by reflecting upon the object of our Lord's sojourn upon the earth for the forty days after the resurrection.

There is a mystery which hangs around this singular period in the life of our Redeemer. Why did he tarry so long upon the earth, when his work appeared to have been finished? What peculiar service did that keeping empty so long his seat at his Father's right hand render to his church and people? During the first eight days, on the first and last of which alone he showed himself in Jerusalem; was he treading unseen the streets of the holy city, or haunting the household of the loved family of Bethany? Those midnight hours; did they see him once again amid the dark shadows of Gethsemane, praying now, not that the cup might be taken from him, but that the fruits of this bygone passion might be gathered in? The Sabbaths of these days; did they see him entering again the temple, passing behind the rent veil into the holy of holies, quenching with his unseen hand, and that for ever, the fire that had burned above the mercy-seat? During the weeks which followed, was he wandering an unseen spectator over the scenes of his earthly ministry; revisiting Nazareth, reëntering Capernaum, where most of his mighty works had been done, looking in with kindly eye upon that nobleman's family, all of whom had believed in him; going out to Cana, casting a passing glance at the dwelling in which the first of his miracles had been performed; lingering for a moment by the gate of the little city of Nain, blessing once more, as he passed, the widow and her recovered child?

It is an idle task, perhaps, for fancy to picture where or how those forty days were spent. But it is not an unprofitable question for us to put to ourselves, what ends could his lingering so long on earth have served? It cannot be supposed that the mere object of affording proof enough that he was still alive, would have detained him here so long. That could have been done in two days as well as in forty. Besides, had that been the main object of his delay, why did he not appear oftener in a more open and public manner than he did? Neither can it be imagined, that it was for the purpose of continued and enlarged intercourse with his disciples. The fewness and shortness of his interviews with them preclude that belief. He was seen by them but ten times in all; five of those appearances occurring on the day of his resurrection; and four of them, those to Mary, to Peter, to James, to the two disciples, having more of a private than of a public character. Out of the forty days there were but six



on which he held intercourse with any human being, and in those six days he did not give more than as many hours to fellowship with those to whom he showed himself. How brief, too, generally, and abrupt the meetings that made up the hours which were so employed! In the twilight of the garden; in the dim-lighted upper chamber; in the gray dawn of the lake side, he appears, speaks but a few sentences, and vanishes as mysteriously as he had appeared. All betokens a studied effort to stand aloof, to shun all close, prolonged, familiar intercourse. What impression was all this studied distance and reserve fitted to make upon the minds of his disciples? Put yourselves into their exact position at this time; remember that not one of them before his death had risen to any thought or belief in his divinity; that from all their earlier earthly notions of him they had to be weaned; that after days and years of the easiest companionship with him, they had to be raised to the belief that it was the very Lord of heaven and earth with whom they had been holding converse; yet, that belief was to be so formed within them, as not to militate against the idea of his true and proper humanity. See, then, what an important part in the execution of this needful, but most difficult task, must have been fulfilled by his mode of dealing with them during the forty days.

For, let us only conceive what should have happened, if one or other of the two alternatives had been realized: if at once, after a few interviews, sufficient simply to do away with all doubt as to his resurrection, Jesus had passed up into the heavens, never to be seen again on earth; let us imagine that the descent of the Spirit had immediately thereon ensued; that the day of Pentecost had followed immediately on the day of the resurrection; that the eyes of the apostles had thus at once and fully been enlightened, and the great truth of their Master's Godhead had been flashed upon their minds; the danger undoubtedly would have been that, seen in the blaze of that new glory, shining thus around his person, the man Christ Jesus had been lost, the humanity swallowed up in the divinity; nor would it have been so easy to persuade those men that, ascended up on high, seated at the right hand of the Father, he was the same Jesus still—a brother to them as truly as when he lived among them, equally alive to all human sympathies as when he walked with them by the way, or sat down with them in the upper chamber.

Take, again, the other alternative; that after his resurrection, Christ had immediately resumed and continued—even let us say for no longer a time than these forty days—the exact kind of life that he had led before, returning to all his old haunts and occupations;

spending a day or two with Lazarus and his sister at Bethany; travelling up through Samaria, and sitting wearied by the well's mouth, as before; living in Peter's wife's sister's house, dining with Pharisees; crossing the lake in the fishing boat; companying with multitudes on mountain-sides; living and acting outwardly in every respect as he had done before—would not such a return on his part to all the old familiarities of his former intercourse, have had a tendency to check the rising faith in his divinity; to tie his disciples down again to a knowing of him only after the flesh; to give to the humanity of the Lord such bulk and prominence as to make it in their eyes overshadow the divinity? Can you conceive a treatment more nicely fitted to the spiritual condition, to the spiritual wants of those men at that time, than the very one which the Lord adopted and carried out—so well fitted as it was, gradually, gently, without violence, (as is ever the mode of his acting in all the provinces of his spiritual empire,) to lead those disciples on from their first misty, imperfect, unworthy ideas of his person, character, and work, on and up to clearer, purer, loftier conceptions of Him? In what better way could a faith in their Master's divinity have been superinduced upon their former faith in him as a man, a friend, a brother, so that the two might blend together without damage done to either by the union; their knowledge of him as human, not interfering with their trust in him as divine; their faith in him as God, not weakening their attachment to him as man?

With this key in our hand—a key which unlocks much of the mystery of our Lord's conduct throughout those forty days—let us return to Mary in the garden. She sees Jesus alive once more before her. She hears him as of old call her by her name. He is hers, she thinks again; hers, as he had been before; hers, not to be torn from her again. All the warmth of those former days of familiar friendship filling her glad heart, she offers him not the homage of a higher worship; but, addressing him as he did her, "Rabboni," she says—my own, my old, my well-beloved Master! She makes some gesture as of embracing him. Gently, but firmly, our Lord repels the too warm, too human, too familiar approach. "Touch me not, Mary." 'You think of me as given back to be to you the same exactly that I was before. You are mistaken; our relationship is changed; our method of intercourse must be altered; you must learn to think of me, and to act towards me, differently from what you ever did before; I am here, but it is only for a short season; I am on earth, but I am now on the way to my Father; my home is no longer with you and the others here below, it is there with my

Father up in heaven; still shall I feel to you and all the others as tenderly as I ever felt, not ashamed even to call them still my brethren. Touch me not, then, Mary; stop not to lavish on me an affection that has in it too much of the human, too little of the divine; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father, and to your Father, and to my God and your God; my Father and my God in a sense in which he is not and cannot be yours; but your Father and your God in a sense in which he could not have been yours had I not died and risen, and been on my way now to sit down with Him on the throne of glory in the heaven.'

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### III.

#### — THE JOURNEY TO EMMANUS.\*

It was towards evening; the day was far spent when the two disciples reached Emmaus; yet there was time enough for them, after they had dined, to return by daylight to Jerusalem, (a distance of about seven miles, a two or three hours' walk,) and to be present at that evening meeting, in the midst of which Jesus was seen by them once more. It must have been between mid-day and sunset that the journey to Emmaus was taken. Of the two travellers, the name of one only has been preserved; that of Cleopas, generally believed to have been a near relation of Christ—the husband of the Virgin Mary's sister. It was not, however, the closeness of the relationship to Jesus which won for him the privilege of that strange conversation by the way. Had nearness of relationship had anything to do with the matter, there was one surely to whom, above all others, we might have expected that he would appear on the day of his resurrection. Yet neither on that day, nor on any of the forty days he spent on earth thereafter, does Jesus seem to have made any special manifestation of himself to his mother, or indeed to have taken any individual notice of her whatever. Her name does not once occur in the record of this period of our Redeemer's life. It looks as if with that kindly, son-like notice of her from the cross, Jesus had dropped the recognition of the earthly relationship altogether, as one not suitable to be carried into that kingdom to whose throne he was about to ascend.

And as it was nothing in their outward relationship to Jesus, so

\* Luke 24: 13-33.

neither was it anything in the personal character, position, or services of these two men which drew down upon them this great favor from the Lord. They had occupied no prominent place beside the Saviour in the course of his ministry. They had exhibited no peculiar strength of attachment to him, or to his cause. Had Peter and James and John been the travellers, it would not have been so remarkable that he should have given them so many of the hours of that first day of his resurrection life; more hours, in fact, than he ever gave to any two disciples besides; nay, so far as we can measure them, more hours than he gave to any other interview of that period—perhaps as many as were spent in all the other interviews together, for generally they were very brief. What was there in these two men to entitle them to such a distinction? They were not apostles, nor were they of any great note among the seventy. Our Lord's first words to them may perhaps help us to understand why it was that he joined himself to them. He has been walking beside them, so close as to overhear somewhat of their conversation. But they are so intent upon the topic which engrosses them, that they notice not that a stranger has overtaken them, and been in part a listener to their discourse. At last, in manner the easiest and most natural, least calculated to give offence, expressive at once of interest and sympathy, Jesus breaks in upon their discourse with the inquiry, "What manner of communications are these that ye have to one another, as ye walk and are sad?" That sadness, who can tell what power it had in drawing the Man of sorrows to their side?—It was to Mary, weeping in her lonely grief; to Peter, drowned in tears of penitence—that he had already appeared. And now it is to these two disciples in their sorrow that he joins himself: so early did the risen Saviour assume the gracious office of comforting those who mourn, of binding up the broken heart. But in Mary, Peter, and these two disciples, three different varieties of human grief were dealt with.—Mary's was the grief of a grateful and affectionate heart, mourning the loss of one beloved; Peter's was the grief of a spirit smitten with the sense of a great offence committed; the grief of the two disciples was that of men disappointed, perplexed, thrown into despondency and unbelief. It is especially noticed that it was while they communed together, and reasoned with one another, that Jesus himself drew near to them. There was much about which they well might differ and dispute. The yielding of their Master to the power of his enemies, and his shameful crucifixion two days before—how could they reconcile with his undoubted pretensions and power, as a prophet so mighty in words and deeds? This one, that other say-



ing of his, pointing to a future, never now, as they fancied, to be realized, what could they make of them? Had Jesus himself been disappointed, deceived; had he imagined that the people would rise on his behalf, and prevent his crucifixion? That might have been, had he not so often shown that he knew all that was passing in men's hearts. Could he, then, have been ignorant how the multitude of Jerusalem would feel and act? There was truth, too, in what so many of them had flung reproachfully in his teeth, as he hung upon the cross: He had saved others, why did he not save himself? What a confused heap of difficulties must have risen up before these two men's eyes as they reasoned by the way! And then besides, there was what they had heard just before they left the city—the report of some women that they had gone out, and found the sepulchre empty, and had seen angels, who had told them that he was alive. They, indeed, might easily have been deceived; but Peter and John had also gone out. It is true they had seen no angels, nor had any one, that they had heard of, seen the Lord himself. But the sepulchre had been found empty. The women were right so far; were they right also in what they said about the angel's message? Could Jesus actually be alive again? We wonder that these two men could have left the city at the time they did; we wonder at this perhaps the more because we know that, had they but waited an hour or two longer, they would have had all their doubts resolved. It is clear enough, however, that neither of them had any faith in the resurrection; and as clear that they were dissatisfied with their unbelief—altogether puzzled and perplexed. Ignorant, they needed to be taught; deeply prejudiced, they needed to have their prejudices removed. For hours and hours, for days and days, they might have remained together without clearing up the difficulties that beset them. But now, in pity and in love, the great Enlightener himself appears—appears in the garb of a stranger who joins them by the way. They do not at first, they do not at all through the earnest conversation which follows, recognize him.

In reading the accounts of all the different appearances of Christ after his resurrection, the conviction seems forced upon us, that some alteration had taken place in the aspect of our Saviour, enough to create a momentary hesitation in recognizing him, yet not enough, after a closer inspection, to leave any doubt as to his identity. In the garden, Mary Magdalene was so absorbed in her sorrow, so utterly unprepared to meet the living Master—she looked so indirectly, with such a heedless glance at the stranger, whom she took to be the gardener—that we do not wonder at her failing to see at

first who he was. So soon, however, as her name was uttered, and she turned and fixed that steadier look upon the speaker, the recognition was complete. To the women by the way, to whom next he showed himself, his very salutation revealed him, and left them no room for doubting that it was he. They held him by the feet, too, for a moment or two, as they worshipped, and got the evidence of touch as well as sight to assure them of his bodily presence. That evening, in the upper chamber, the disciples were assembled. They could not be taken by surprise. They were prepared by the reports of Mary Magdalene, of the women, of Peter, of the two disciples from Emmaus, to believe that he was alive; yet when Jesus stood in the midst of them, they supposed that they had seen a spirit; so troubled were they at the sight, so incredulous were they even as they looked at him, that he had to say to them: "Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your heart? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have;" and still further, to remove all doubt, he asked that some meat should be presented, and he took the piece of the broiled fish and the honeycomb, and did eat them in their presence. It may have been the sudden apparition of Christ in the midst of them, while the doors of the chamber remained unopened, which, in part, begot the belief that it was a spirit that stood before them; but that there was something too in the changed appearance of their Master, which helped to sustain that belief, is evident, from what is told us of his next appearance by the lake side of Galilee. John's quick's eye and ear recognized him from the boat; but when they had all landed and gathered round him, "None of them," it is said, "durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord." Whence the desire to put such a question, but from a passing shadowy doubt, and whence the doubt but from some change in his appearance? When afterwards, on the mountain which he had appointed, Jesus showed himself to above five hundred brethren at once, they saw him, and worshipped; but some, it is said, doubted—those, let us believe, who saw him then for the first and only time, and on whom the sight seems to have had the same effect that it had in the first instance on nearly all who witnessed it. It seems to us the best, if not the only way of accounting for this, to suppose that the resurrection body of our Lord had passed through a stage or two in its transition from the natural into the spiritual body; from its condition as nailed upon the cross, to its etherealized and glorified condition as now upon the throne; the flesh and blood which cannot inherit the heavenly kingdom, still there, yet so modified as to

be more plastic under the power of the indwelling spirit, less subject to the material laws and conditions of its earlier being, the corruptible on its way to the incorruptible, the mortal putting on the clothing of immortality. And that strange, half spiritual appearance which the risen Lord presented, may it not have served to further the great end that our Lord had in view throughout the forty days, namely, to wean the minds of his disciples from their earlier, lower, more human conceptions of him, to a true faith in his mingled humanity and divinity?

There was, however, something special, I believe, in this instance of the two disciples travelling to Emmaus. They might not have recognized him, as, clothed perhaps in the garb of an ordinary traveller, he put his first questions to them by the way; but when he assumed the office of their instructor, and, showing such intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures, made their hearts burn within them, as he unfolded their new meaning, must they not many a time have turned on him a very searching look, wondering, as they looked, who this strange teacher possibly could be? Yet were two or three hours spent in that close and earnest conversation, without their once suspecting that it was the Lord. How accurately does this accord with the differing statements of Mark and Luke! Mark distinctly tells us that he appeared to them in another, in a strange form—a form different from that in which they had seen him previously. He appeared to them, as to all the others, somewhat changed in aspect; but had that been all, they would speedily have recovered from their first surprise, and ere many minutes, would have identified him. For a reason, however, hereafter to be alluded to, our Lord purposely concealed himself till his work of instruction was completed, and drew a veil of some kind over their eyes, which hindered their discovery of him by the way.

He comes to them as an entire stranger, such as they might naturally have met upon the road; and it is as a stranger that throughout he converses with them. "What manner of communications," he says, "are those that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?" Little need, thought one of them (his own deep interest in them leading him, perhaps, to exaggerate that felt by the general community)—little need of asking such a question. Of what could any two men leaving Jerusalem, only two days after that crucifixion had occurred—of what else than of it, and him the Crucified, could they be talking? "Art thou only," says Cleopas, "a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?" And the stranger says to him, "What things?"



Thus it is, by questions needless for him on his own account to put, but very useful to them to answer, that Jesus draws out from them that statement, which at once reveals the extent of their ignorance and incredulity, but, at the same time, the amount of their belief, the strength of their attachment to Christ, and the bitterness of that grief which the disappointment of their expectations regarding him had created. A stranger though this man is to them, they do not hesitate to confess their faith in Jesus of Nazareth as a prophet mighty in words and deeds; obnoxious as they know the now hated sect to be, they do not hesitate to acknowledge themselves openly as disciples of this persecuted and now crucified Nazarene, though the hope they once had, that he should have been the Redeemer of Israel, they must confess themselves to have relinquished. Nay, so far has the kindly and sympathizing inquiry of this stranger won for him a way into their confidence, that, as if he must be interested in all that concerned the discipleship of Jesus, they tell him what certain women of their company, and certain others of themselves, had reported about the sepulchre.

The stranger's end is gained. The wound has been gently probed; its nature and extent revealed; and now the remedy is to be applied. He who had asked to be informed, takes the place of the instructor; he who had been reproached for his ignorance, reproaches in his turn. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe!" Slow of heart indeed, and difficult to convince had they been, who, after such explicit declarations of his own beforehand, that he should be delivered up to the rulers, and suffer many things at their hands, and be crucified, and rise again the third day, had nevertheless remained so obstinate in their incredulity. Truly the rebuke was needed. Yet how faithful are the wounds of a friend; he wounds but to heal; he rebukes the unbelief, but instantly proceeds to remove its grounds, even as he rose from his slumber in the storm-tossed fishing-boat, first to rebuke the disciples for their unbelieving fears, and then to quiet the tempest which had produced them. The one great, misleading prejudice of the disciples had been their belief that the path of the promised Messiah was only to be one of triumph and of glory. To rectify that error, it was only required that they should be made to see that the predicted triumph and glory were alone to be reached through the dark avenues of suffering and of death. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." Either Christ, then, is



not himself to be believed—in which case it were useless to hear and read anything about him—or in those Old Testament Scriptures there are to be seen everywhere prophetic fingers pointing forward to Him. To search those Scriptures, and to find little or nothing there of Christ, little or nothing to show how it behooved him to suffer, and then to enter into his glory, is to handle them after a very different fashion from that in which they were handled by our Lord himself.

It is not likely that these three travellers had a copy of the Old Testament in their hands. It was not by reference to chapter and verse, that the exposition of the Saviour was conducted; it was by no minute criticism of words and phrases, that the conviction of these wayfaring men was carried. They were familiar generally with the Scriptures. One or two of the leading prophecies about the Messiah, such as that first one of God himself in paradise, as to the seed of the woman and the serpent; such as that of Moses as to the raising up of a prophet like unto himself; such as that of Isaiah, when he saw his glory, and testified beforehand of the sufferings by which that glory should be preceded and entered; such as that of Daniel about the Messiah being cut off, but not for himself—Jesus may have quoted. But not alone from direct and specific prophecies—from the paschal lamb, and the smitten rock, and the serpent of brass, and the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat, but from the whole history of the Jewish people—from the entire circle of types and ceremonies and sacrifices, did Jesus draw forth the materials of that wonderful exposition by which, for two hours or so, he kept those listening men hanging upon his lips. As we think who the expounder in that instance was, and what the materials of his exposition, how natural the expression, Would that I had heard all these things concerning Christ illustrated by Christ himself! But have we not the substance of that exposition, as much of it as is needful for us to have, preserved in the writings of the New Testament, and may we not be sure that if we believe not them, neither would we be persuaded though one rose from the dead, as Jesus that morning had done, and should teach us even as he taught those two disciples?

There was something indeed peculiarly, sublimely interesting in that two hours' walk and talk of these three men on the way to Emmaus. Had you been on that road that day, had you met those travellers as they journeyed on, beyond the earnestness of their conversation with one another, you would have seen nothing remarkable about them, nothing to make you turn and look back upon them as they passed. Two of them are men in humble attire, travelling in the humblest fashion, returning to one of the humblest village-homes:

and the third, there is nothing about him different in appearance from the other two; nothing to keep them from conversing with him as an equal, one with whom the most unrestrained familiarity might be used. Yet who is He? He who that very morning had burst the barriers of the grave; he in honor of whose exit from the tomb angels from heaven had been despatched to watch at the foot and at the head of the sacred spot, where in death his body had for a time reposed; he who was now upon his way to enter into that glory which he had with the Father before the world was—incarnate Deity fresh from the conflicts and the victories of the garden, the cross, the sepulchre. It is literally God walking with men, men walking, though they knew it not, with God. History tells us of earthly sovereigns stripping themselves at times of all the tokens and trappings of royalty, for the purpose of mixing on equal terms with the humblest of their people; but history never told, and imagination never pictured a disguise, an *incognito* like this. But why was that disguise adopted, and, in this instance, so long preserved? Why, instead of doing as he did with the eleven, first manifesting himself, and then opening their understanding to understand the Scriptures, did he keep himself unknown all the time that the work of exposition was going on? May it not have been to obtain such a simple, natural, easy access for the truth into these two men's minds and hearts, as to give it, even when unsupported by the weight of his own personal authority, a firmer and securer hold? Whatever may have been its more special object as regards the two disciples, wonderful indeed was that condescension of our Lord which led him to give so many hours of his first resurrection-day to this humble office. Many a proud scribe in Jerusalem would have recoiled from it, have deemed it a waste of his precious time, if asked to accompany two such humble men, and spend so much of one of his Sabbaths in instructing them out of the Scriptures. The divine Redeemer himself thought it not a task too lowly; and by devoting, in his own person, so much of that first Christian Sabbath to it, has he not at once left behind him a pattern of what all true and faithful exposition of the sacred Scriptures ought to be, even the unfolding of the things touching a once crucified, but now exalted Saviour; and has he not dignified, by himself engaging in it, the work of one man's trying, at any time, or in any way, to lead another to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus? —

It was with heavy hearts that the two disciples had left Jerusalem; and had all the journey been like the first few paces of it, it had seemed a long way to Emmaus. But they are at the village now, and the road had never appeared so short. Had they imagined they

could be there so soon, they would have lingered on the road. And now this stranger, whose discourse had so beguiled the way, and made their hearts so burn within them, makes as if he would go farther. Emmaus, it would seem, is not his resting-place. But how can they part from him? How may that conversation, which has shed such a fresh light into their understandings, such a new hope into their hearts, be prolonged? They invite, they urge him to remain. He gives, he makes the opportunity for their constraining him to be their guest. He acts as he had done with the two blind beggars; with the disciples in the storm; with the Syrophenician woman. He suffers violence to be used with him; and then, when he has brought out all the strength of desire and affection towards him in the earnest entreaty, he yields to the urgency he had himself excited. The two disciples constrain him, and he goes in apparently to abide with them. They have him now, as they think, with them for the whole evening; and what an evening it shall be, when, supper over, the conversation of the wayside may be renewed. The humble table is quickly spread. This is the home, it has been thought, of one of the two disciples, and he whose home it is prepares to do the duty of the host. That duty is taken out of his hands. The mysterious stranger takes the bread; he blesses, he breaks, he gives. Who but One could bless and break and give in such a way as this? The scales fall from the disciples' eyes. 'Tis he, their own lost but now recovered Lord and Master. Let him wait but a moment or two, they shall be clasping him, as Mary would fain have done, to their hearts, or, falling down, as the women did, and worshipping at his feet. Time is not given them. He reveals himself, and disappears. This moment known by them, the next vanishing from their sight.

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#### IV.

#### THE EVENING MEETING.\*

WHEN they left Jerusalem on the afternoon of the first day of the week, the two disciples had intended to remain that night, perhaps permanently, at Emmaus. The Paschal Sabbath over, they had resolved to return to their village home, to their old way of living, burying, as best they could, their expectations disappointed. But the conversation by the way, the manifestation in the breaking of

\* Mark 16 : 13, 14 ; Luke 24 : 33-49 ; John 20 : 19-23.

bread, that revealed and vanishing presence of their risen Lord, altered the whole current of their thoughts and acts. They could not stay at Emmaus. Late as it was, they instantly arose and returned to Jerusalem. How quickly, how eagerly would they retrace their steps! What manner of communications would those be that they would now have with one another; how different from those which Jesus had interrupted; the incredulity turned now into faith, the sadness into joy. The stranger who had made their hearts burn within them, on their way out to the village, he too was traversing at the same time the road they took on their way back to Jerusalem. But he did not join them now; he left them to muse in silence on all they had seen and heard, or to add to each other's wonder, gratitude, and gladness, by talking to one another by the way. Their hearts were now full of the desire to tell to the brethren they had left behind in the city all that had happened. On reaching Jerusalem, they get at once the opportunity they so much desire. A meeting of the apostles, and of as many others as they could conveniently call together, or could entirely trust, had quietly, somewhat stealthily convened; the first, we may believe, since the Thursday evening meeting in the upper chamber. And where but in that same chamber can we imagine that this Sunday evening assembly gathered? The doors were closed against intruders, but these two well-known disciples from Emmaus are easily recognized, and at once admitted. In what an agitated, conflicting state of thought and feeling do they find those assembled there! They had all heard the reports of the women and of Mary Magdalene; but they say little or nothing about them; perhaps give them little credit. But there is Peter, whom no one can well distrust, telling all the particulars of his interview, and carrying the conviction of so many, that they are joyfully exclaiming; "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." But this is not the general, not at least the universal state of sentiment. The two disciples tell their tale, but it falls on many an incredulous ear. They are as little believed as the women and Mary Magdalene had been. They are trying all they can by a minute recital of how Jesus had been known of them, to remove the incredulity, when suddenly, coming as a spirit cometh, casting no shadow before him, the doors not being open to let him in, no sight nor sound giving token of his approach, Jesus himself is in the midst of them, and his "Peace be unto you" stills at once the conflicting conversation that had been going on. The manner of this appearance may have been wholly miraculous and supernatural, or it may have been partly or wholly due to those new properties with which



the resurrection body of the Saviour was endowed. Upon this difficult topic I have already said all it seems needful or perhaps possible to say. We must leave it clothed with the mystery which surrounds it. No mystery, however, hangs round the kindly, condescending manner in which Jesus proceeds to deal with the terror which his sudden appearance had created. He points to his hands, his feet, his side, to the marks of those wounds that told of his recent death; marks which it pleased him that his resurrection body should still bear; marks which, it would seem from the apocalyptic vision, were not to be effaced even from that glorified body which he carried to the throne; marks which that form is to wear for ever, the only visible memorials that are to survive of the great decease accomplished at Jerusalem. Jesus asks them to handle him; an invitation which it is difficult to say whether they accepted or not. He shows them his hands and his feet; and while yet they believe not for joy and wonder, he seeks still further to remove their incredulity, by showing them that he has still the power, though no longer the need, of partaking with them of their ordinary food. He eats of the fish and of the honeycomb. Doubt now gives place to conviction, fear to believing joy; a joy so fresh, so full, that it in turn begins to shake the new-born faith. How true to nature all this rapid succession of conflicting sentiments. Now at last, however, that little company of disciples has settled into a condition fitting it to listen, and Jesus returns to the subject that had engrossed the conversation on the way out to Emmaus; to this larger, more influential audience he unfolds the testimony that Moses, the prophets, the Psalms—all the three divisions into which the Scriptures of the Old Testament were classified by the Jews—rendered to his Messiahship; dwelling particularly upon the topic most suited to the existing condition of their thoughts, how, in accordance with all that had been beforehand declared and signified, it behooved him, as the Christ, to suffer and then to rise again the third day. “Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.” Wherever, therefore, in the writings of any one of these Christ-taught men they refer an important passage of the Old Testament to the Messiah, we may conclude that they had for doing so the direct and authoritative sanction of our Lord’s own interpretation.

But his Messiahship, his death, his resurrection, were not matters in which they alone, their nation alone, were interested. Now that the needful work of suffering and death was over; now that the wonderful exhibition at once of the sacredness of the Divine law, the holiness of the Divine character, the deep unutterable love of God,

had been given; now, wide over all the world, were repentance and remission of sin to be proclaimed in his name; and they, the men to whom Jesus was then speaking, were to be the witnesses, the heralds, the preachers of this large and all-embracing gospel of peace on earth, and good-will on God's part towards all the children of men: the first and earliest hint this of the nature and the extent of their great commission; a hint which they did not then understand, which they did not understand even under the enlightening and quickening influence of the day of Pentecost. So far their understanding was opened, that they saw clearly now that Christ ought to have suffered these things, and then to enter into his glory; but their understanding was shut as to that proclamation of God's forgiving mercy and love, which now in the name of Jesus was to be borne abroad over the whole earth.

But though it was to be left to time, and the after teachings of the Spirit, to lift them out of their narrow conceptions of the Divine love to man, as if its outgoings were to be limited to the pale of any one community upon earth, still an initial impression of the sacredness of their vocation as his disciples, of the manner in which the duties of that vocation could alone properly be discharged, and of the blessed and enduring results which were to follow in the train of that discharge, might be made upon their minds. And this was the result which Jesus, in the most striking and solemn manner, proceeded now to bring about: the first step taken by him in the gradual and slow-moving process of qualifying them for that mission which they, and all other disciples of the Saviour after them, were to undertake and carry out.

Then said Jesus unto them again, "Peace be unto you!" His first greeting, in which the same words had been used, they had been too surprised and affrighted to listen to, or take home. Now that their minds had become more composed, that they had settled down into a tranquil and joyful conviction that it was indeed their risen Lord who was in the midst of them, he repeats the greeting; repeats it that they might not take it—though it was the common salutation phrase he used, as meant merely to be the usual greeting with which Jew met Jew in the ordinary intercourse of life; that they might not take it as a mere expression of good-will, a wish for their welfare; but that they might have their thoughts thrown back upon what, three evenings before, he had said to them: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." He had said so with the cross, with the sepulchre before him. And now the peace having been secured, and sealed by the blood of the

cross and the rising from the sepulchre, with a new emphasis he says to them, 'Peace, my peace, peace with God, peace of conscience, the peace of pardon be unto you; take it as coming to you through me; enter into, and enjoy it as the fruit of my passion, as God's free gift to you in me. Let the quickening, the comforting assurance that God is at peace with you, that you are at peace with God, take possession of your hearts; that, having tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious, you may be prepared for executing the high errand on which I am about to send you forth, that of publishing everywhere the gospel of this peace; preaching peace by me to them that are afar off, and to them that are nigh; "For as my Father sent me, even so now send I you." I send you forth in my name, and I will qualify you by my Spirit.' And having said so, he breathed on them, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost"—an outward and expressive symbol of the twofold truth, that dead, motionless, useless for all the common work of this earthly existence, as lay that dust which the hand of the Creator moulded into human form till he breathed into it the breath of his natural life, so dead, motionless, useless for the work of our Christian calling do we all lie, till the breath of true spiritual life be breathed into us by the Holy Ghost. And as it was from the lips of the risen Saviour that the breath proceeded, which spread out upon the little company at Jerusalem, so is it from the risen, exalted Saviour that the Spirit comes, whose life-giving influences spread over the whole church of the first-born. But specially upon this occasion was the breathing of Jesus upon the disciples, and the gift which accompanied that breathing, meant to indicate that the mission on which Jesus was sending these disciples out—that of being witnesses for him—was one that could alone be discharged by those who, through him, had received more or less of that heavenly gift. It was this impartation of the Spirit, which was to form the one, indispensable qualification for the work; without which it could not be done. We know, historically, that it was but a very limited measure of this gift which was actually, upon this occasion, bestowed. The Holy Ghost was not yet in his fulness given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified. The more plentiful effusion of this gift was reserved for the day of Pentecost. That Spirit, who was to convince of sin, and to lead into all truth, began even then, indeed, his gracious work in the minds and hearts of these disciples, by convincing them of their unbelief and hardness of heart, and by opening their minds to understand the Scriptures. This was but an earnest of better things to come—a few sprinkled drops of that fuller baptism wherewith they were afterwards to be baptized; but yet enough



to teach that it was by Spirit-taught, Spirit-moved men—by men in whose breasts the heaven-kindled fire of the true spiritual life had begun to burn—that the commission Jesus had been giving could alone be executed. And let not those to whom Jesus is now speaking, speaking as the heads and representatives of the whole body of his true followers upon earth; let them not think, weak as they are, powerless as they appear, that, in going forth to proclaim in his name, to every penitent transgressor, the free, full, instant, gracious pardon of all his sins, they are embarking in an ideal, unreal work—a work of which they shall never know whether they are succeeding in it or not.

‘No,’ says the Saviour; ‘Partake of the peace I now impart, accept the commission I now bestow; go forth in my name; receive ye the Holy Ghost to guide you; announce the news of God to sinners; proclaim the remission of sins, and, verily I say, whosoever sins ye thus remit, they are remitted; whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.’ Such I take to be the real spirit and objects of these last words of Jesus, as spoken by him to his disciples at this time; words spoken to animate them in their after work by the assurance that they should not labor in vain; that what they should do on earth should be owned and ratified in heaven. It were to misinterpret the incidents of that evening meeting; it were to mistake the simple, immediate, and precise object which, in using them, our Lord had in view, to explain these words, as if they were intended to clothe the eleven apostles, and after them, their successors or representatives—to clothe any class of officials in the church, exclusively, with a power of remitting and retaining sins. Where is the evidence that, as originally spoken, the words were addressed exclusively to the eleven? There were others present as well as they. “The two disciples,” Luke tells us, “found the eleven gathered together, and those that were with them.” These other members of the infant church, with the two disciples, had the benediction pronounced on them, as well as on the eleven; the instructions were given to them as well as to the eleven; the breath was breathed on them as well as on the eleven. Had Jesus meant, when he spake of this remitting and retaining sins, to restrict to the eleven the power and privileges conferred, should he not by some word or token have made it manifest that such was his desire? At other times he was at pains to single out the twelve, when he had something meant for their eyes and their ears alone. Is it likely that at this time he would have omitted to draw a line between them and the others who were before him, had it been to them that these closing words were exclusively addressed?



But we have another and still stronger reason for not believing in any such restriction. Jesus had once before used words of nearly the same import with those that are now before us, and he had addressed them to the disciples at large: "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." The two concluding verses, as well as the preceding context, contain the conclusive evidence, that it was not to any select class or order of his followers that Jesus said, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matt. 18:15-20.)

We are not in the least disposed to doubt, that while Christ speaks of the remitting and the retaining of sins as pertaining to the church at large, his words cover the acts of the church in her organized capacity, the inflicting and removing of ecclesiastical censures through her office-bearers in the exercise of discipline. Here, however, we have two remarks to make: First, that it is only so far as these acts are done by spiritual men, seeking and following the guidance of the Spirit, only so far as they are in accordance with Christ's own expressed will, that they are of any avail, or can plead any heavenly ratification; and, secondly, that all the force they carry is nothing more or less than an authoritative and official declaration of what that will of the Lord is. Neither in any man, in any pope or any priest, in any community, or in any ecclesiastical court, lies the absolute, the independent, the arbitrary power to absolve the sinner from his sins. But did not he, we are asked, with whom alone it is acknowledged that that power rests, appoint the eleven as his earthly delegates, and in the commission here given them, convey into their hands as such, that power? Just as little as in two other commissions given to two of the old prophets, he handed over to them that power over the kingdoms and nations of the earth which we rightly

believe and affirm resides alone in the hands of the Almighty. "Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth: and the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, and to build, and to plant." Jer. 1:9, 10. "It came to pass also in the twelfth year, in the fifteenth day of the month, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, wail for the multitude of Egypt, and cast them down, even her, and the daughters of the famous nations, unto the nether parts of the earth, with them that go down into the pit." Ezek. 32:17, 18.

Here, in terms not less distinct than those in which Christ gives his disciples power over the sins of men, to remit or to retain, God gives to the two prophets power over the nations to cast down and to destroy. The true interpretation of the grant or commission is in both cases the same. In the exercise of any power, inherent or delegated, natural or acquired, Jeremiah and Ezekiel were altogether impotent of themselves to overturn a nation; in the exercise of any power, original or conferred, personal or official, the apostles were just as impotent to remove any sinner's guilt. The prophet's function was limited to the denouncing of a doom which it was for the hand of Jehovah alone to execute. The church's function is as strictly limited to the announcing of a pardon which it is for the grace of the heavenly Forgiver alone to bestow. And if, in executing that simple but most honorable office of proclaiming unto all men that there is remission of sins through the name of Jesus, she teaches that it is alone through her channels—through channels that priestly or ordained and consecrated hands can alone open—the pardon cometh, she trenches upon the rights and prerogatives of Him whom she represents, and turns that eye upon herself that should be turned alone on him.

But it is the gracious office of the church, of every individual member thereof, of every distinct community thereof, in the sense here indicated, to absolve the sinner, to assure him of the divine forgiveness, to help him to believe in that forgiveness. Wherever the gospel of the grace of God is preached, not generally, but pointedly, to an individual man, and he is entreated and encouraged to take hold of peace, to accept of pardon, to trust in the mercy of Jesus, to believe in the forgiving love of God—then is that office of remitting sins in the name of Jesus undertaken and discharged. Two illustrative instances occur to us; the one public and official, the other private and personal. The first is that of the penitent offender

at Corinth, who was in danger of being swallowed up of overmuch sorrow. Assuming that it lay with the church to extend her forgiveness to that offender, desiring to do nothing upon his own individual authority, claiming no exclusive power of priestly absolution, Paul invites the Corinthian believers to deal tenderly, forgivingly with that man, and to receive him back into their communion, telling them that he was quite prepared to go along with them in such treatment of the penitent. "Wherefore I beseech you," he says, "that you would confirm your love toward him. To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also; for if I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it, in the person of Christ." The great object was to make the repentant one feel how wide, how generous, how cordial and unreserved was the forgiveness which the church extended to him, that he might all the more confidently repose in that other sympathy, that other forgiveness, which, far as the heavens are above the earth, are above all the sympathy, all the forgiveness of man.

Our other instance belongs to a late period in the life of the beloved disciple. It lies beyond the period embraced in the New Testament history, but is well authenticated. When the tyrant who sent John to Patmos was dead, the apostle returned to Ephesus. Engaged in a visitation of the neighboring churches, he saw in one of them a youth of so attractive an appearance that he specially committed him to the care and guardianship of the bishop, or chief minister of the church. The minister took the youth to his own home, cherished him, educated him, and at length baptized him. As he grew up, however, the care of his guardian relaxed, and he fell into the company of a band of idle and dissolute youths, who plunged together into a career of sin which led to the committal of offences that exposed them to the severest penalties of the law. Escaped from all restraint, and forming his association into a band of robbers, the youth became their captain, surpassing all of them in deeds of violence and blood. Time ran on, and the aged apostle once more visited the same church. He asked about the youth, and wept when he heard his story. He took his way instantly to the district which the robber-band infested, and was taken prisoner by the outguard of the banditti. He neither tried to fly nor offered any resistance to his captors. "Conduct me to your captain," he said to them; "I have come for the very purpose of seeing him." As soon as he recognized the venerable apostle advancing towards him, the captain would have fled; but the apostle pursued him, crying out, "Why dost thou fly, my son, from me thy father—thy defenceless



aged father? Have compassion on me, my son. Fear not, thou still hast hope. I will intercede with Christ for thee. Believe that Christ hath sent me." The fugitive was arrested. They met once more. The apostle entreated him; prayed with him; solemnly assured him that there was pardon for him at the hands of Christ; and did not leave him till he led him back again, and restored him to the church. In the manner of his restoring that erring youth, the beloved apostle showed how thoroughly he had imbibed the spirit of his divine Master, from whose lips half a century before he had listened to the words, "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted."

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## V.

### — THE INCREDULITY OF THOMAS.\*

WAS it his fault, or his misfortune simply, that Thomas was not present at that first meeting on the evening of the day of the resurrection? Clearly enough, we cannot charge his absence with the same kind of neglect, with which now a refusal to join in the ordinary services of the sanctuary would be loaded; for no such services had then been instituted, nor had any authority, human or divine, as yet prescribed them. That evening conference, hastily summoned under the prompting of the strange incidents of the day, was, in fact, the first of those assemblings on the Lord's day which have since become one of the established customs of Christianity. But as no such custom had as yet been established, Thomas cannot be accused of violating it. The circumstances, however, under which that conference was held, were so peculiar, the pressure which prompted it so urgent, that we cannot imagine that any slight or fortuitous impediment would have kept any one of the eleven away. It may, therefore, have been Thomas' extreme incredulity as to the fact of the resurrection, the utter and blank despair into which the death of his Master had cast him, which indisposed him to join the rest. If it were so; if he kept aloof from his brethren as believing that no good could come from their assembling; that it was all over with the hopes as to their Master which they had been cherishing; that they were mere idle tales which had been circulating about his having risen from the dead—then, for his neglect of all that Jesus had predicted about his death and resurrection, and for his treatment of

\* John 20 : 24-29.



the testimony of Peter and the other early visitors of the sepulchre, he was amply punished, in losing that sight of the risen Jesus given to the others, and in his being left, for the seven days that followed, to the wretchedness of uncertainty and doubt—an uncertainty and doubt which would be all the bitterer, as contrasted with the unclouded convictions and new-born joy of his brother disciples. While they, lifted from the depths of their despair, were congratulating one another on the great triumph over death and the grave which their Master had achieved, were strengthening each other's faith, and heightening each other's joy, he, alone and disconsolate, was scraping together the scanty food on which his incredulity might nourish itself. In the course of that week, his brethren made many attempts to rid him of his distrust. But all in vain; the more they insisted, the more he refused. The stronger they affirmed the proof to be, the more inflexible became his resolution to resist it. The particulars of the manifold conversations and discussions which would, no doubt, go on between them, are not preserved. All that is told is, that he took and kept resolutely to that position behind which he had entrenched himself, as he said, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." What were the grounds, real or fictitious, upon which this incredulity of Thomas rested? and how came that incredulity to take such a shape, and to embody itself in such a declaration?

Here, I think, by realizing distinctly the actual condition of things, both as regards the external circumstances which surrounded him, and the jaundiced eye with which he was disposed to look at them, we may convince ourselves that the incredulity of Thomas was not due to any reluctance, on his part, to believe in the resurrection, simply because of its being a strange, a supernatural occurrence. In that age, and in that country, this was a form of unbelief altogether rare, quite unlikely to have been exhibited by Thomas or any follower of Jesus Christ. A belief in the supernatural was general, almost universal. To withhold his belief in any occurrence, purely and solely because it was miraculous, would have made a man about as conspicuous then, as a belief in all the alleged miracles of ancient and modern times would make a man conspicuous now. Between that time and this, the world has undergone an entire revolution in the state of its general belief, in the form of its practical infidelity. Besides, even if there had been a large leaven of Sadduceeism working originally in the mind of Thomas, he had already witnessed, in his attendance upon Christ, incidents too extraordinary for him to

refuse credence to the resurrection purely and solely on the ground of its singularity. Neither he, nor any others of the Lord's disciples—unwilling, as they all were at first, to believe that their Master was indeed alive again; difficult as they all were of conviction on this point—would have admitted their initial hesitation and incredulity to have proceeded from any such source. It was not the character of the event, it was the nature of their precedent faith in, and their precedent expectations about, their Master and his kingdom, which generated the difficulty which was felt by them as to believing in the resurrection. The true fountain of their earlier incredulity lay within, and not without; in their prejudices in regard to other matters, not in the nature and circumstances of the resurrection. There appears to me, therefore, to be a violence done to the historic truth, to the real state of the case, when Thomas is taken, as he so often is, as a type or early instance of that unbelief, belonging rather to modern than to ancient times, which staggers at all miracles, and is indisposed to admit anything supernatural.

Thomas' incredulity seems to have outstripped that of all the other disciples. They would not believe the Galilean women, when they brought to them the first reports of the resurrection; but they had believed when Peter told them that he had seen the Lord, even before they saw him with their own eyes. But Thomas will not believe, though to Peter's testimony there is added that of the two disciples who went out to Emmaus, and that of the whole body of the disciples to whom Jesus had afterwards appeared. To what is this excess, this peculiar obstinacy of unbelief on Thomas' part, to be attributed? Was he the most prejudiced man among them; the man who clung most tenaciously to his earlier ideas and prepossessions, and would not let them go? Did those common elements of unbelief, which operated in the breasts of the others as well as in his, yet work in his with so much greater force as to signalize him in this way, and keep him standing out in his distrust for so long a time beyond them? There was one of those elements which we have some reason to think did work powerfully on Thomas. It would be quite a mistake to conceive of Thomas, because of his abiding incredulity, that he was a cold, selfish, cautious, unsanguine, naturally misbelieving man, hard to convince of anything which lay outside the circle of his own observations, or that did not touch or affect his own interests. Whatever in origin and nature his skepticism was, it was not the skepticism of religious indifference, nor did it spring from a predisposition to doubt. That the spirit of curiosity, of inquiry, was strong in him, we may perhaps infer from his breaking in upon our Lord's

discussion in the upper chamber, saying, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" Fuller evidence that he possessed and knew how to exercise the critical faculty, that he liked to search and sift the evidence, and get at the real and solid grounds for believing, will meet us presently; but we must dismiss from our minds the idea that he answered in any way to the description which Wordsworth has given us of the man—

"A smooth-rubbed soul, to which could cling  
No form of feeling, great or small;  
A reasoning, self-sufficient thing,  
An intellectual all in all."

The only other notice of him in the gospel narrative, besides the one already alluded to, and that in the passage now before us, forbids us to entertain any such ideas of Thomas' natural character and disposition. Escaping out of the hands of his enemies, Jesus had retired to Bethabara. To him, in his retreat, the sorrowing sisters sent their message: "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." The messengers were left without an answer. But, after two days of delay and inaction, Jesus abruptly says to his disciples, without explaining anything of the object of his visit, "Let us go into Judea again." It seemed a fatal resolution; the disciples try to turn their Master from acting on it. "Master," they say to him, "the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again?" Their Master then tells of the reason for his going, and of his resolution at all hazards to carry out his intention. Then, says one of the twelve, if he will go, go to almost certain death, "let us also go, that we may die with him." Had the name not been given, had we not been told which of them it was who so instantly, so warmly, so generously declared himself ready to die with his Master rather than desert him, we should have said that it must have been Peter who spake these words; but it was Thomas, to whom much of Peter's ardor appears to have belonged. Upon such a man, so ardent in his attachment to his Master, we can readily believe that the blow of the crucifixion came with a peculiarly stunning force. In proportion to the eagerness of his hopes would be the blackness of his despair; nor is it wonderful that, sunk into the depths of that despair, he would at first refuse to believe in the resurrection. Still, however, attribute what extra force we may to this one or that other of the ingredients of the unbelief shown by Thomas in common with his brethren, it seems difficult to understand the pertinacity of Thomas in standing out so long and so stubbornly against all attempts of his brethren to convince him. The great bulk of them had believed before they had seen the Lord. Why should



that evidence, which was sufficient to carry their faith, not have carried his? Yes, but they all at last had seen; they had seen, and he had not. In that very distinction do we not get sight of the secret bias by which the spirit of Thomas was swayed over to an unwillingness to give credence to the resurrection, an incredulity which, in self-justification, built up those buttresses of self-defence, behind which it finally entrenched itself, and from which it would not be dislodged? The others had seen him, and he had not; why should he be asked to believe on different evidence from theirs? He had been as attached a follower of Jesus as any of them. Why should he be singled out, and left the only one who had not seen his Master? He did not like, he did not choose to be indebted to others for the grounds of his believing. He had just as good a right to ocular proof as they had; and, in fact, till he got it he would not believe. The unwillingness that his faith should be ruled by theirs, generated a disposition to question the soundness of that faith. The evangelist has given us only the conclusion to which Thomas came, the result of the many conferences with his brethren, and to which he for so many days so resolutely adhered. The very terms in which he embodied this resolution enable us to fill up the blank. Jesus had come among them, the other disciples would tell Thomas, suddenly, silently—the door being shut; they had not seen him till he was standing in the midst. It was very like the mode of a spirit's entrance; very unlike the manner in which one clothed with a solid substantial body would or could appear. They confessed to Thomas, that unless it were the two disciples who had just come in from Emmaus, all of them at first believed that it was a spirit, none of them that it was Christ; that he had himself noticed this, and had corrected their first and false impression. He had eaten in their presence, he had shown them the marks in his hands and side; he had said, "Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." Yes, but had any of them accepted the invitation, had any of them made such scrutiny of these marks, as to be sure that they were not superficial? They could not say they had. Strictly interrogated by one who was anxious to detect any weak point in the evidence, they could not deny that it was within the limits of the possible that there might have been a mistake; that there was a difference, they could not tell what, between the appearance of their Master as they had seen him before death, and as they saw him at the evening meeting. Seizing greedily upon anything which could possibly create a doubt, and turning it into an instrument of self-justification, Thomas at last declares, "Except I shall not only see in his hands the print of the



nails, but shall put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." In this we discern no small amount of ingenious casuistry springing out of wounded pride, and an exaggerated feeling of self-consequence working in a nature not less strong in will than ardent in affection.

"I will not believe." 'And is it even thus,' we feel disposed to make answer, 'that thy hurt vanity hopes to redeem itself from the fancied oversight; is it thus that placed, as thou thinkest, below thy brethren, by not having got the same proof given them, thou thinkest to set thyself right by putting thyself above them, and declaring that that proof may have been enough for them, but is not enough for thee? What right hast thou to ask a kind or amount of evidence above that which has satisfied all these thy brethren, and which would have satisfied any one unbiased by deep precedent prejudice? What right hast thou to dictate thus to God, and to declare that thou wilt not believe till the form of proof thou prescribest be afforded? Thou wilt not believe! and if thou dost not, who but thyself will be the loser? Hadst thou been in the hands of man, in any other hands than those of so gracious a Master, thou mightest have waited long enough ere the proof was given, which in such a spirit was demanded.'

Seven days go past, and the apostles are once more gathered together on the evening of the second first-day of the week. Thomas is with them now. What brought him there? Why, if he thought them wrong in rejoicing over an event, in the reality of which they had not sufficient reason to believe, did he join himself to their company? Because, I believe, with all his assumed and declared incredulity, he was not in his inmost heart such an utter unbeliever as he would have others think he was. He had taken up a position which it behooved him to defend; but I am much mistaken, if a strong desire, an expectation, nay, something even of a faith, that it was even as his brethren had told him, was not working latently, yet strongly in his breast. We often grievously err in this respect, in our judgment or representations of others. If a man is known or said to be a covetous or an ambitious man, we are too apt to make him all covetousness or all ambition, and nothing besides. And so, Thomas being obstinately incredulous, we might imagine him to be utterly so. Not at all likely. There was room in him, as there is in most men, for very opposite and conflicting states of thought and emotion. We believe, therefore, that it was in a very mixed state of faith and feeling that Thomas sat down that evening with the rest. They have not sat long when again, in the very same way in which he had come before, Jesus

enters and stands before them. The general salutation over, and before another word was spoken, he turns to Thomas and says, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." How sudden, how unexpected the address! Thomas knew that for seven days none of the disciples had seen the Lord; none of them could have reported to Him the words that he had used. Yet now are these very words repeated. It is the omniscient Jesus; it is his own well-loved Master who stands before him! Instant within him is the rebound from incredulity to faith, to a far higher faith than that simply in the reality of the resurrection; of that he has no doubt. He does not what the Lord desires, and what he himself desired before. He does not put his finger into the print of the nails; he does not thrust his hand into the side. Enough to see that well-known form; enough to hear that well-loved voice. That sight, those words of Jesus, are sufficient to rebuke and to remove his unbelief. In a moment his doubts all flee; faith takes their place; a faith purified, exalted, strengthened; a faith in the true divinity as well as in the true humanity of his risen Lord; a faith higher, perhaps, at that moment than that to which any of his brethren around had attained. Adoring, believing, loving, the fervent, affectionate Thomas casts himself at his Master's feet, exclaiming, "My Lord and my God!"

A great advance here, we may well believe, on all Thomas' earlier conceptions of his Master's character. And may we not believe also that the bitter experience of the preceding week, the troubled exercises of thought through which he then had passed, the searchings of those Scriptures which it was reported to him had been quoted and commented on by Christ himself, had all been secretly preparing him to take this advancing step; to believe that the Messiah of ancient prophecy was a very different Being in character and office from what he had before imagined; much lowlier in some respects, much higher in others. And now, all at once, the revelation of the Redeemer's glory bursts upon him as Jesus in person stands before him; and not only does all his former incredulity die away, but on its ruins there rises a faith which springs up all the higher and stronger, because of the pressure by which it had previously been kept in check. Jesus knew how prepared Thomas was to call him Lord and God. He then might be asked to do what to Mary was so emphatically forbidden. "Touch me not," he said to her whose love to him had too much in it of the earthly, the human—too little of the spiritual, the divine. "Reach hither thy hand," he said to

Thomas. The invitation may be safely given to him who is ready to own the divinity of his Lord.

The title given him, conveying as it did so distinct and emphatic a testimony to that divinity, Jesus at once, as if it were his by birth-right, accepts. But though he refuses not the tendered homage, he passes no such approving judgment on him who presents it, as he had formerly done upon Peter when he had made a like confession of his faith, and Christ had called him blessed. Instead of this, Christ administers now a mild but effective rebuke: "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed." Christ could not mean by saying so, to declare that he who believes without seeing is more blessed than he who upon sight believes: for that would exalt the weakest believer now above the strongest believer of Christ's own age. The idea that Jesus evidently intended to convey was this, that of two kinds of faith equally strong, that was to him a more acceptable, and to the possessor a more peace-giving one, which rested on reasonable testimony in absence of personal observation, than that which would not yield to this kind of evidence, and demanded that ocular demonstration should be given. It was, in fact, as addressed to Thomas, a distinct enough yet delicate intimation, that his faith had been all the more acceptable to his Master if it had not been delayed so long. But though this was the primary meaning of the saying, it is not without its bearings upon those who, like ourselves, have not seen, and yet are called to believe. The spirit of Thomas still lives among us. Have we not often detected ourselves, thinking at least, if not saying, that, had we lived in the days of Jesus Christ, had we seen what those disciples saw, we would not have doubted as they did; that, give us but the evidence that they had, and our doubts would disappear? We practise thus a strange deception upon ourselves. We transfer ourselves in fancy to those scenes of the gospel history, carrying with us all the ideas of our age, forgetting that very different were the ideas of the men of that generation, who, though they had the advantage of the sight, had the disadvantage of the prejudices of their country and their epoch. So equalized in point of advantage and responsibility do we believe the two periods to have been, that we may safely affirm, that the men of this generation who will not believe in the testimony of the original eye-witnesses, had they been of that generation, would not have believed though they had been eye-witnesses themselves. He who now says, I will not believe till I see, would not, even seeing, have then believed.

Two closing reflections are offered. *First*: Take this case of



Thomas, his throwing himself at once at his Master's feet, exclaiming, "My Lord, my God," as a most instructive instance of the exercise and expression of a true, loving, affectionate, appropriating faith. It is outgoing, self-forgetting, Christ-engrossed. No raising by Thomas of any question as to whether one who had been incredulous so long, would be unwelcome when at last he believed. No occupation of mind or heart with any personal considerations whatever. Christ is there before him; thought to be lost, more than recovered; his eye beaming with love, his encouraging invitation given. No doubt about his willingness to receive, his desire to be trusted. Thomas yields at once to the power of such a gracious presence, unshackled by any of those false barriers we so often raise; the full warm gushing tide of adoring, embracing, confiding love, goes forth and pours itself out in the expression, "*My Lord, and my God!*" Best and most blessed exercise of the spirit, when the eye in singleness of vision fixes upon Jesus, and, oblivious of itself, and all about itself, the abashed heart fills with adoration, gratitude, and love, and in the fulness of its emotion casts itself at the feet of Jesus, saying with Thomas, "My Lord, my God."

*Second:* Let us take this instance of our Lord's treatment of Thomas, as a guide and example to us how to treat those who have doubts and difficulties about the great facts and truths of religion. There was surely a singular toleration, a singular tenderness, a singular condescension in the manner of the Saviour's conduct here towards the doubting, unbelieving apostle. There was much about those doubts of Thomas affording ground of gravest censure; the bad *morale* of the heart had much to do with them. It was not only an unreasonable, it was a proud, a presumptuous position he took up, in dictating the conditions upon which alone he would believe. What abundant materials for controversy, for condemnation did his case supply! Yet not by these does Jesus work upon him, but by love—by simply showing himself, by stooping even to comply with the conditions so unreasonably and presumptuously prescribed. And if, in kindred cases—when the spirit of religious incredulity is busy in any human breast, doing there its unhappy work in blasting the inward peace—waiving all controversy we could but present the Saviour as he is, and get the eye to rest upon him, and the heart to take in a right impression of the depth and the tenderness and the condescension of his love, might not many a vexed spirit be led to throw itself down before such a Saviour, saying, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief"?



## VI.

## THE LAKE-SIDE OF GALILEE.\*

SPEAKING to his disciples in the upper chamber before his death, Jesus said to them, "After I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee." On the morning of the resurrection, the angel said to the first visitants of the empty sepulchre, "Go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you." And as they went to execute this message, Jesus himself met them, and said, "Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me." Pointed so frequently and emphatically to Galilee as to the chosen district within which their Master was to manifest himself, we might have anticipated that the apostles would have taken their immediate departure from Jerusalem. They could not have done so, however, during the passover week, without being guilty of a great offence against the religious feeling of their fellow-countrymen. They stayed, therefore, for these ten days still in the holy city. This delay in proceeding to Galilee had their Master's sanction not indistinctly put upon it, by his twice appearing to them collectively, while they yet lingered in the metropolis. And yet, upon the first of these occasions, on the evening of the day of the resurrection, Jesus said to them, "Behold, I send the promise of my Father unto you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." How are we to explain the contradictory orders upon which, given in the course of the same day, they were called upon to act? Galilee had obviously, for some special reasons, been selected by Christ as the region in which some special revelations of himself, after his resurrection, were to be given. Did this spring from a strong desire to revisit the scenes of his early life, the neighborhoods in which most of his wonderful works were done? In solitude and concealment, shunning everything like frequent or continued intercourse even with his own disciples, Jesus was to spend forty days on earth, before his ascension to the Father. Would it have been unnatural, that he should desire that the larger number of these days should be given to regions hallowed to him by associations such as human memory had never before been intrusted with? Or was it that, as Galilee had absorbed the largest share of his earthly labors,

\* John 21:1-14.

and had yielded to that labor the largest fruits, so it was there that the largest number of his disciples could be congregated, and that the quietest and securest opportunity of meeting with them could be had? It was there, we know, that he met the five hundred brethren; perhaps, it was there only that so many could have been collected, or, being collected, could have found a secluded and protected meeting-place. Whatever the motives were which prompted the Saviour to fix beforehand upon Galilee, and to announce it as his chosen trysting-place for meeting with the brethren at large, one can well enough see how desirable it was that the apostles should be laid under the double obligation, *first*, of going northward to Galilee, that they might share in the benefit of the most public of all Christ's appearances after his resurrection; and, *secondly*, of returning to Jerusalem, as to the place in which the promise of the descent of the Spirit was to be fulfilled, and they were to be clothed with power from on high to execute their great mission upon the earth. Nearly two months were to elapse, ere that baptism of the Spirit was to be given. It might have been inconvenient or dangerous for them to have spent so long an interval idly, without occupation or means of support, in the metropolis. But neither were they to be suffered to return to their old Galilean haunts without an intimation being made to them, that it was in Jerusalem that their apostolic work was to make its auspicious commencement. It is not likely that the apostles saw this at the time as we now see it, as they saw it afterwards themselves. When they first left Jerusalem, they had perhaps no small difficulty in harmonizing the apparently conflicting instructions which had been issued. One thing was very apparent, that their Master intended to show himself to them in Galilee; and to Galilee, therefore, as soon as the passover celebration was over, they retired.

One evening some of them are together by the lake-side. Whether any of them had ever thought of resuming their old way of living, or had actually engaged in it, we do not know. All, however, is, this evening, so inviting; the lake looks so tempting; the night, the best time for the fisher's craft, so promising; their old boats and nets so ready to their hand—that one of them, the very one from whom we should have expected such a proposition to come, in whom the spirit of his old occupation should be the readiest to revive, Peter says to them, "I go a fishing." The others say, "We also go with thee." It was not a concerted meeting this by the lake-side. The proposal is evidently on the part of Peter a thought of the moment, and it is agreed to in the same quick spirit as that in which it is made. The meeting, the proposal, the acquiescence, all seem fortuitous, accidental.

Yet was it not all foreseen, all pre-arranged? An unseen eye follows these seven men as they embark, and watches them at their fishing toil; even the eye of him who was waiting for them in the morning by the shore, by whose hand it was that the whole accidents of that night and morning were regulated. Even so let us believe, in regard to the most casual occurrences which happen still to the disciples of Jesus, that a providence as special and as gracious as that of which these seven men were the objects, is in them all, and over them all, causing them all to work together for their eternal good. Fitfully, curiously, without art or fixed design of ours, may the web of our destiny be woven, the threads thrown at random together, no orderly pattern apparently coming out of their conjunction, and yet, of all that web there is not a single thread whose place, whose color, whose motion is not arranged with infinite skill, so as to mould our spiritual and eternal existence according to its predestined plan. As we recall and review the past, we may trace up to some trivial origin, some chance meeting, some accidental conjunction of circumstances, our present position, our present habits, our present character. As we do so, we may be disposed to ascribe all to a blind fate; but let this scene by the Galilean lake-side, and the many other incidents of a like kind which the life of our Redeemer supplies, be the living proofs to us, that "chance also is the daughter of forethought," that the minutest details as well as the most momentous incidents of our earthly history, are all under the constant guidance of our Redeemer.

The disciples toiled all night; it was the time most favorable for their work. These seven men knew the lake well, every bay of it where fish were most likely to be taken; and they were skilled at this craft. Yet, though they did their best, and toiled all through the watches of the night, they caught nothing. Two years before, Peter had once been out all night with as little success, but Peter had never seen so many practised hands in a single boat toiling so long and toiling so fruitlessly. Had the remembrance of that other night of like fruitless labor been suggested to any of the seven? It would not seem that it had. The morning breaks upon the quiet lake, upon the wearied boatmen, and finds them within one hundred yards or so of the shore. There, upon the beach, a stranger stands; stands as any inhabitant of the neighborhood might have stood, who, having caught sight of the fishing-boat, and knowing how its occupants must throughout the night have been engaged, wanted to be one of the first purchasers from them of the fruit of their toil. One might have thought that the very sight at such an early hour of a solitary figure upon the shore, would have awakened curiosity in



the hearts of the disciples, and that, as they had been frequently and distinctly told, it was here in Galilee they were to see their Master again, it might have occurred to them that it was Jesus. The very kind and form of the question put to them, "Children, have ye any meat?"—a question which it appears much more clearly from the original than from our English version, was just the one which any stranger wishing to become a purchaser of their fish might have put—may have served rather to allay than to stimulate their curiosity. It is certain, at least, that they did not at first recognise him. Having got an answer to his question; having been told that they had nothing in the boat, Jesus said to the exhausted and hopeless fishers of the night, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find." They may have wondered for a moment at an order of that kind being given; they may have thought that the stranger had seen some indication of the presence of fish in that direction, which had escaped their eye. They may have had but little faith that the new cast of their net would be more successful than the many they had made before. But what the stranger directs can easily be done. They may try one last throw of their net before they land. They do so, and now at once they see that not without a reason had the order been given. Now, they find, that within the small enclosure which their net makes, such a multitude of fishes is embraced, that they have difficulty in drawing it through the water towards the land. And now it is that love proves itself as quick of eye as it had already shown itself to be swift of foot. When Peter and John ran out to the sepulchre, John outstripped Peter in the race. He outstrips him also in the recognition. They are together in the boat; a strange attraction binds the gentlest to the most forward of the twelve; and no sooner does it appear that the last cast of the net, taken in obedience to the command of him who stands upon the shore, is not only successful, but successful to an extraordinary degree, than the thought flashes into the mind of the beloved disciple that it must be Jesus. "It is the Lord," whispered John to Peter. The Lord! Thomas has taught them the expression; they begin to speak of him as the Lord. "It is the Lord," says John, and satisfies himself with saying so. And now once again the characteristic difference between the two men reveals itself: John the first to recognize, but Peter the first to act upon the recognition. At once believing that it is as John has said, Peter, leaving it to the others to drag the net to shore, flung himself into the water. It was but a short distance to the shore—about two hundred cubits, one hundred yards. He was quickly beside the stranger; although it does not



appear from the narrative that he gained anything by his greater forwardness of movement.

It is soon evident that it was not the want of any supply out of their boat which had led Jesus to put to them the question, "Children, have ye any meat?" On landing, the disciples find a fire of coals, and fish already laid thereon, and bread at hand. Who gathered these coals? Who kindled that fire? Whence came the fishes and the bread? Mysteriously provided, the materials for the morning meal are there, quite independent of any supply which the last draught of the net may produce. But though all be ready for the weary and hungry fishermen, they must not leave their own proper work unfinished. As they gather in wonder around that fire to gaze on him who has furnished this fresh food for them, "Bring," said Jesus to them, "of the fish which ye have now caught." As if reminded by this order, of his having failed to take his proper part in the labor of dragging the net to the shore, Peter is now the readiest to act upon this injunction. It is he who lands the net; and not till the fish taken in it have been secured and counted, does Jesus say to them, "Come and dine." He takes the bread and the fish, breaks and divides them among the seven. Was the miracle of the mountain-side here, on a smaller scale, again enacted? Was there only food enough for one man there at first, and did that food multiply as he blessed (which we may assume he did) and parted it among them? This at least, is certain, that he was known now not of Peter and John alone, but of all the seven, in the breaking of the bread. They all know it is the Lord; yet none of them durst ask him anything about himself—a mysterious awe felt in his presence sealing their lips. It is in silence that this morning meal by the lake-side is partaken of. This, John says, was the third time that Jesus had showed himself; not literally the third time that he had showed himself to any one, but the third time that he had showed himself to the disciples collectively assembled in any considerable number, after he had risen from the dead.

It had been by a miraculous draught of fishes, like the one now before us, that, at the outset of his ministry, Christ had drawn away three at least of the seven now around him from their old occupations, and taught them to understand that in following him they were to become fishers of men. Why was that miracle repeated? Because the lesson which it conveyed was needed to be again given and reënforced. Had they been told at first to go to Galilee without the hint of a power to be given from on high, to be bestowed at Jerusalem, they might have returned to their old neighborhoods under the

impression that they were to abide there permanently. And now that, bereft of the companionship of Christ, deprived of the means of support, if not driven by necessity, yet tempted by opportunity, they resume their ancient calling, was it not needful and kind in Jesus to interfere, and, by the repetition of that miracle, whose symbolic meaning they could not fail at once to recognize, to teach them that their first apostolic calling still held good, that still the command was upon them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men"?

The two miracles, the one wrought at the beginning, the other at the close of the Lord's ministry, were substantially the same. Regarded as symbols or mute prophecies, they carried the same significance. Yet there were differences between them, perhaps indicative that the one, the earlier miracle, was meant to shadow forth the first formation; the latter miracle the future and final ingathering of the church. In the first instance, Christ was himself in the vessel; in the second, he stood upon the shore. In the first, the order was a more general one: "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." In the second, a more specific one: "Cast the net on the right side of the ship." In the first, the nets began to break, and the ship to sink; in the second, nothing of the kind occurred. In the first, it was a great multitude of fishes that were enclosed, of all sizes, we may believe, and of all qualities. In the second, it was a limited number of great fishes which was drawn to land. It may be a fancy—if so, however, it is one that many have had fond pleasure in indulging—to see in these diversities, the distinction between the present and visible effects of the casting forth of the gospel net upon the sands of time, and that landing and ingathering of the redeemed upon the shores of eternity. Treat this idea as we may, and great as are the authorities which have adopted it, I own to the disposition to regard it more as a happy illustration than a designed symbol—the image is a scriptural one, that both individually with Christians, or collectively with the church, the present scene of things is the night of toil, through whose watches, whether fruitful or not of immediate and apparent good, we have to labor on, in hope of a coming dawn, when upon the blessed shores we shall hail the sight of the risen Lord, and share with him in partaking of the provisions of a glorious immortality.

The night is far spent; that day is at hand. Let our toil then be one of hope, and our hope one full of immortality. And yet, dark and often troubled though it be, has not this night of our earthly sorrow shown us orbs of light we might never have seen by day? What should we have known of the Saviour had it not been for our

sin ; what of his power to comfort, but for our present sorrow He is, indeed, the great light of this dark world of ours. In his incarnation we behold the earthly shining of this light. And what shall we say of his miracles, that long series of wonders done, of which this one by the lake-side was the closing one, but that they were the means taken by him for the fuller shining forth of that light which lighteth every man who cometh into this world? Of the first miracle it is said in Scripture, and the saying may be applied to the last as to the first, to them all throughout—"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory." His glory as the Son of the Father stands forth exhibited in these miracles--there is a simplicity, an ease, a dignity in the very manner of their performance, which distinguish him from all other wonder-workers. Moses must plead hard, and struggle long in prayer with God, ere Miriam is cleansed of her leprosy. Elijah and Elisha must stretch themselves upon the dead ere life comes back again. Peter must say to the lame man at the temple gate, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." These all act as servants in the name of Another, who permits them upon rare occasions to speak in their Master's name, and to use their Master's power. But Christ, as a Son in his own house, speaks in his own name--puts forth his own power. His language to a leper is, "I will ; be thou clean." He touches the bier, the bearers at the touch stand still : he looks upon the lifeless body, and saith, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise." His word of power is heard in the recesses of the rocky sepulchre : "Lazarus, come forth."

But chiefly the glory, not of power, but of goodness, of love, was manifested forth in these miracles of Jesus. The miracles of Moses were miracles of awe and terror ; wrought in rivalry of the colossal powers of ancient heathenism, they were on a scale of amplitude befitting their design, their chief sphere external nature, the earth, the rock, the river, the ocean, and the sky. Around the miracles of Jesus, a milder but richer glory gathers ; their chief sphere, the region of human life, man's sins, man's sorrows, man's maladies, man's wants. It is divine power acting as the servant of divine love, which meets to gladden our eye. Nor is it in these miracles alone of Jesus that this love and power in blended action are to be beheld. It is not so much as outward evidences of the divinity of his mission, but still more as exhibitions and illustrations of his divine character, that we prize and love to study these miracles of our Lord ; and their chief lesson is lost on us, if we fancy that it was then only when he was working them, that the divine power and the divine goodness



that lay in him were acting. That power and love were everywhere and at all times going forth from him; and the only true believer in love and power divine, is he who sees them in every change of nature, in every work of providence, in every ministration of grace, and who never fancies that it is in the working of miracles alone that the great hand and power of the Omnipotent are to be beheld. The miracles are to be regarded by us, not as stray specimens, rare and exclusive manifestations of that unseen Lord whom we adore, but as methods merely which he has taken, suited to our ignorance and to our indifference, to startle us into attention, to make visible to us that which ever lurks behind unseen, to quicken us to that faith which, when once rightly formed and exercised, shall teach us to see God in all things, and all things in God.

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## VII.

### PETER AND JOHN.\*

THE repetition of the miraculous draught of fishes was nothing else than a symbolical renewal of the commission given originally to the apostles, intended to teach them that their first calling to be fishers of men still held good. There was one, however, of the seven for whose instruction that miracle was intended, whose position towards that apostolic commission was peculiar. He had taken a very prominent place among the twelve, had often acted as their representative and spokesman. But on the night of the betrayal he had played a singularly shameful and inconsistent part. Vehement in his repeated assertion that though all men should forsake his Master he never would, though thrice warned, he had thrice over, with superfluous oaths, denied that he ever knew or had anything to do with Jesus. How will it stand with Peter, if that apostolic work has to be taken up again? Has he sufficiently repented of his sin? Will he not, in the depth of that humility and self-distrust which his great fall has taught him, shrink from placing himself on the same level with the rest? Does Jesus mean that he should reoccupy the place from which, by his transgression, he might be regarded as having fallen? Singling him out when the morning meal by the lake-side was over, Jesus said to him, 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these, thy brethren, my other disciples do?' What a skilful yet del-

\* John 21 : 15-23.



icate method, without subjecting him to the painful humiliation of having his former denials of his Master exposed and dwelt upon, of testing and exhibiting the trueness and deepness of Peter's repentance. Will he repeat the offence; will he again compare himself with the others; will he again set himself above them; will he renew that boasting which was the sad precursor of his fall? How touchingly does his answer show that he perfectly understood the implied reference to the past; that he had thoroughly learned its humbling lessons. No longer any comparing himself with, or setting himself above others. He will not say that he loves Jesus more than they; he will not say how much he loves. He will offer no testimony of his own as to the love he feels. He will trust his deceitful heart no more. But, throwing himself on another's knowledge of that heart, which had proved better than his own, he says: "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee."

Our Lord's reply is a most emphatic affirmative response to this appeal. It is as if he had said at large: 'Yes, Simon Barjona, I do know that thou lovest me; I see too that thou wilt make no boast of thy love; neither in that nor in anything else wilt thou set thyself above thy fellows; by the pressure of this probe into thy throbbing heart it has been seen how true and deep thy penitence has been, how thoroughly it has done its work in humbling thee. And now, that thou, and these thy brethren, may know and see how readily I own and acknowledge thee as being to me all thou ever wert, I renew to thee this great commission; I reinstate thee in the apostolic office: "Feed my lambs!"'

Peter was not asked a second time whether he loved more than others; but as three times he had been warned, and three times he had denied, so three times will Jesus reinstate, restore. Can we wonder that Peter was grieved when, for the third time, the general question, "Lovest thou me," was put to him? It was not the grief of doubt, as if he suspected that Jesus only half believed his word, but the grief of contrition, growing into deeper sadness at the so distinct allusion to his three denials, in the triple repetition of the question. With a sadder and fuller heart, in stronger words than ever, he makes the last avowal of his love: "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee."

In the Greek tongue, the language in which this conversation between Christ and Peter is recorded, two different words are used for the one translated *love*, two different words for the one translated *feed*, and two different words for the one translated *sheep*. We may believe that in that dialect of the Hebrew which was spoken by

Christ, from which the Greek was itself a translation, (for we are to remember that only in one or two instances have the actual words spoken by Jesus been preserved,) there was some way of making the same distinction of meaning which is expressed in the different words for *love*, and *feed*, and *sheep*. It would be quite out of place to go farther here into such a topic. The result is that Jesus first asks Peter whether he cherishes to him a love, spiritual, holy, heavenly: that Peter declines using the term which his Master had employed, and contents himself with speaking of a kind of affection, simpler, more personal, more human; that Jesus first commits the feeding of the lambs to Peter, then the general guidance or oversight of the whole flock that he had purchased with his blood; and that finally he returns to the simple idea of feeding, as applied to this whole flock.

Of more importance is it to notice (as supplying the room for this variety) the change of image from that of the fisher to that of the shepherd, as representing the apostolic or ministerial office. Had it been solely as fishers of men that Peter and his brethren had been described, as the business of the fisherman is to get the fish into the net, and draw them safe to land, so it might be thought that the one office of the spiritual fisherman was to bring sinners to Christ, to get them safe into his arms. A true, yet contracted idea of the scope and bearing of the ministerial office might come thus to be entertained. It is very different when that office is presented to us under the idea of a pastorate. A much truer, because ampler conception of its manifold privileges, responsibilities, means, duties, objects, is thus acquired. Oversight, guidance, care, protection, provision, these are of the most varied kind, as adapted to all the conditions, exposures, wants, of all the separate members of the flock, and are all embraced within the function of the shepherd. But let us not here fashion to ourselves a perfect ideal of what the spiritual shepherd is, or ought to be, and then imagine that each under-shepherd of the great Christian flock is bound, in some degree, to realize, in his own person and his own work, each separate attribute, each separate mode or class of activities, which go to constitute the model that we have constructed. The work of the Christian ministry was, in the apostolic age, almost wholly evangelistic, aggressive. There was not the call nor the opportunity then for the exercise of many of those gifts, which came afterwards to be consecrated to the cause of Christ, to the advancement of his kingdom. Yet, even then, there was no one fixed course, which all apostles, and all presbyters, and all elders, and all deacons were alike called upon to follow. Had we the lives and labors of all the twelve apostles before us, I am per-

suaded that we should be as much struck with the diversity, as with the multiplicity of their operations. Very different, as in a single instance we shall presently see, were the characters, the dispositions, the capabilities of the twelve men whom the Lord himself selected as the first propagators of his religion upon earth; and room was found for all these differences acting themselves out in the different spheres of labor selected by, or assigned to them. So is it, so should it be still, in the labor of individual Christians, in the work of the Christian ministry. God has scattered among us a great variety of gifts, has set us where a great variety of services may be rendered. As there are many members in one body, yet all have not the same office; so neither have all the true members of Christ's mystical body the same office to discharge. "Let not the hand then say to the eye, I have no need of thee, nor the head to the foot, I have no need of thee." Let not those who are engaged in one kind of Christian work criticise or condemn those who are engaged in another. Let each of us do the best we can with the kind and amount of the talent intrusted to us; let each of us try to do that which both naturally and immediately comes to our hand, not judging one another; "for who art thou who judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth," but not to thee.

There is, however, one common, universal, indispensable qualification for all genuine Christian work—a supreme, a constraining love to Christ. Once, twice, thrice, is the question, "Lovest thou me?" put to Peter; and once, twice, thrice, no sooner is an affirmative reply given than the injunction follows: 'If thou lovest me, as thou lovest me, then feed my lambs, feed my sheep.' And the first, the second, the third pre-requisite for all true feeding of the lambs, the sheep of the Saviour's flock, is attachment to himself—a love to Jesus Christ running over upon all who, however weakly, do yet believe in him. The want of that love, nothing can supply: not mere natural benevolence—that may lead its possessor to do much to promote the happiness of others, may win for him their gratitude and good-will, but will not teach him to labor directly and supremely for their spiritual, their eternal good; not the mere sense of duty—that may secure diligence and faithfulness, but will leave the work done, under its exclusive promptings, sapless and dry—the element not there of a warm and tender sympathy, that best instrument of power. It is love-inspired, love-animated labor, which Jesus asks for at our hands. That we may be able, in any degree, to realize it, let it be our first desire and effort to quicken within our souls a love to him who first, and so wonderfully, loved us; the flickering and



languid flame in us, let us carry it anew, day by day, to the undying fire that burns in the bosom of our Redeemer, to have fresh fuel heaped upon it, to be rekindled, refreshed, sustained, expanded. To know and believe in the love that Christ has to us, to feel ourselves individually the objects of that love, to open our hearts to all the hallowed influences which a realizing sense of that love is fitted to exert—this is the way to have our spirits stirred to that responsive affection to him, which gives to all Christian service purity and power.

“Simon, Simon,” our Lord had said to Peter before his fall, “Satan hath desired to sift thee as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted”—converted, Jesus means here not in the ordinary sense of the term, but recovered, restored—“then strengthen thy brethren.” That strengthening of the brethren formed part of the shepherd’s office, now anew committed to Peter; and what a lesson had he got in the treatment which he had himself received at the hands of the Chief Shepherd, as to how that office should be discharged! The prayers, the warnings, the look of love, the angel’s message, the private interview, this conversation by the lake-side—these all told Peter of the thoughtfulness, the care, the kindness, the pitying sympathy, the forgiving love, of which he had been the object. Thus had he been treated by Jesus; and let him go and deal with others as Christ had dealt with him.

So far in what Christ had spoken, while there was much that was personal and peculiar to Peter, there was much also that had a wider bearing. But now the Lord has a word, which is for Peter’s ear alone. “Whither I go,” (he had said to him in the upper chamber,) “thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterwards;” and Peter had said in reply, “Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I am ready to go with thee to prison, and to death; I will lay down my life for thy sake.” These words of the apostle, though sadly falsified the night when they were spoken, still were to hold good. Peter did follow his Master, even unto death. He did lay down his life for Jesus’ sake; crucified, as his Lord had been. Knowing this, and knowing that he needed all the encouragement which could be given him, to fortify him to meet the martyr’s doom, not only will Jesus in that private interview in the resurrection-day wipe all his tears away, and now in presence of his brethren reinstate him in his apostolic office, but he will do for him what he does for no other of the twelve—he will reveal the future so far as to let him know by what kind of death it should be that he should glorify God—to let him know that the opportunity would be at last afforded



him of making good the words which he too hastily and boastfully had spoken. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." The explanatory clause which is introduced here, creates the impression that there had been a break or an interruption of the discourse. From verse twentieth, it would appear too, that Jesus had made some movement of withdrawal. These two circumstances combine in inducing the idea, that when our Lord said to Peter, "follow me," he meant simply that he should go along with him as he now retired. If, however, the words of the nineteenth verse were spoken in immediate connection with, and in continuation of what is recorded in the eighteenth, then, in saying "follow me," our Lord might have had in his eye the very words of Peter about following him to prison and to death, and have meant, in using them, to say, 'When thou shalt be old, and another shall seize upon thee and bind thee as they seized and bound thy Master in preparation for his crucifixion, then Peter, follow me, through the Cross to glory.'

It is very difficult, owing to the briefness of the gospel narrative, to picture to our eye the scene which followed. Did Jesus, as he said "follow me," arise to depart, and was Peter in the act of following when he turned and saw John following also? Did John mistake so far the meaning of Christ's word and act, as to consider himself equally with Peter called upon to follow? or was it of his own motion, and without any real or imagined invitation that he was acting? However it was, Peter, his mind full of the many thoughts that this pre-intimation of his death had excited, turns and sees John by his side. His own fate had been foretold; what, he wondered, would be John's? The beloved disciple had once, at his suggestion, put a question to their Master about the others; now he will put a question about John—a question of natural and of brotherly curiosity, yet somewhat out of place. He has resumed too rapidly his old position, and his old hasty and forward ways. Jesus will not become a fortune-teller, to gratify even a friendly inquisitiveness. He puts a check upon the unbecoming inquiry, and yet, singularly enough, even in rebuking, he answers it. "'If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.'" Each man's path, as each man's duty, is separate and distinct. What the lot of another man may be, has nothing to do with the regulation of thine individual course. What is it to thee, Peter, whether John's destiny shall be the same or different from thine? The thing

for thee to do is not to turn aside to busy thyself with his hereafter, but to occupy thyself with the duty that lies immediately before thee to discharge. What is that to thee? follow thou me.' But "if I will that he tarry till I come:" Only imagine that Jesus was other than divine, and how arrogant the assumption here of his will regulating human destinies, fixing the time and the manner of his disciples' death; Deity incarnate alone was entitled to use such language: "If I will that he tarry till I come." When John wrote his gospel, that saying of Jesus was not understood. Some regarded it as implying that John should never die. The beloved disciple himself saw only so far into its meaning, that it contained no direct assertion of that kind, but farther he did not then see. Perhaps afterwards, when he saw all the apostles die out before, and witnessed, as he only did, the destruction of Jerusalem, of which Christ had often spoken as identified with his coming—perhaps at that time, forty years after the meeting by the lake-side, he remembered the words that his Master had spoken, and wondered as he perceived how remarkably they were fulfilled.

Next to the absence of all notice of our Lord's mother, few things are more remarkable, in the narrative of the period after the resurrection, than the silence respecting John. One of the earliest visitors at the sepulchre, present at both the evening interviews at Jerusalem, the disciple whom Jesus loved is neither spoken of nor spoken to. This is the only case in which he meets our eye, and he appears here rather in conjunction with Peter than with Jesus. In the account of our Lord's ministry, though John was frequently associated with Peter, it was as one of the two sons of Zebedee, the tie to his brother James being then obviously a stronger one than that to Peter. But from the hour when the two entered together the hall of the high priest, a singular attraction appears to have drawn these two men together. The brotherly tie yields to one which has become still stronger, and instead of its being Peter and James and John, it is now Peter and John who are seen constantly in company with one another. This is all the more singular, when one considers how unlike the two were in natural character, in original disposition.

John was born a lover of repose, of retirement. Left to himself, he would never have been an adventurous or ambitious man. Even in his very motion there had been rest. Had he never seen the Saviour, he would have remained quite contented in the occupation to which he had been brought up. To sit upon the sunny banks of that lovely inland lake mending his nets, his eye straying occasionally across its placid waters, or lifted to the blue expanse above; to take

his accustomed seat in his fishing-boat, to launch out by night under these burning heavens, and sweep over the well-known haunts, would have been enough for him; he neither would have desired nor sought for change. It may seem to militate against this idea of John's character that he and his brother were called Boanerges, the sons of thunder. We are not told, however, the reason why this title was bestowed on them; it may have been derived from something peculiar in the father rather than in the sons. Nor can we allow the bestowal of an unexplained and ambiguous epithet to outweigh the whole drift and bearing of the gospel narrative, which speaks so much of the meekness and modesty and gentleness and retiringness of John. But let us not confound John's yielding gentleness with that spirit of easy compliance which shuns all contest, because it does not feel that there is anything worth contending for. Beneath John's calm and soft exterior there lay a hidden strength. In the mean, vulgar strife of petty, earthly passions, John might have yielded when Peter would have stood firm. But in more exciting scenes, under more formidable tests, John would have stood firm when Peter might have yielded. This was proved on the night of the arrest and the day of the crucifixion. And there was latent heat as well as latent strength in John. As lightning lurks amid the warm, soft drops of the summer shower, so the force of a love-kindled zeal lurked in his gentle spirit. The Samaritans might a thousand times have refused to receive himself into their dwellings, and it had stirred no resentment in his breast; but when they contemptuously refused to receive the Master to whom he was so ardently attached, it was more than he could endure. He joined his brother James in saying, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?"—a solitary outbreak of a sentiment but seldom felt, or if felt, habitually restrained; yet that single flash reveals an inner region where all kinds of vivid emotions lived and moved and had their being.

Nor let us confound John's simplicity with shallowness. If it be the pure in heart who see God, John's was the eye to see farther into the highest of all regions than that of any of his fellows. If it be he that loveth who knoweth God—for God is love—John's knowledge of God must have stood unrivalled. We reckon his as belonging to the highest order of intellect; not analytical nor constructive; the logical faculty, the reasoning powers, not largely developed; but his the quick bright eye of intuition, which, at a glance, sees farther into the heart of truth than by the stepping-stones of mere argumentation you can ever be conveyed. There were besides under that calm surface



which the spirit of the beloved disciple displayed to the common eye of observation, profound and glorious depths. The writer of the gospel and epistle is, let us remember, the writer also of the Apocalypse; and if the Holy Spirit chose the vehicle best fitted for receiving and transmitting the divine communications, then to John we must assign not the pure deep love alone of a gentle heart, but the vision and the faculty divine, the high imaginative power.

Peter, again, was born with the strongest constitutional tendency to a restless and excited activity. He could not have endured a life of monotonous repose. He was a child of impulse; he would have been a lover of adventure. He was not selfish enough to be a covetous, nor had he steadiness enough to be a successfully ambitious man; but we can conceive of him as intensely excited for the time by any distinction or any honor placed within his reach. Had he never seen the Lord, one cannot think of him as remaining all his life a fisherman of Galilee; or, if the natural restraints of his position kept him there, even in that fisherman's life he would have found the means of gratifying his constitutional biases. Eager, ardent, sanguine, it needed but a spark to fall upon the inflammable material, and his whole soul kindled into a blaze, ready to burst along whatever path lay open at the time for its passage. The great natural defect in Peter was the want of steadiness, of a ruling, regulating principle to keep him moving along one line. Left to work at random, the excitability of such a susceptible spirit involved its possessor often in inconsistency, exposed him often to peril. We have, however, had this apostle so often before us, that we need not say more of him. Enough has been said to bring out to your eye the strong contrast in natural character and disposition between him and John. Yet these were the two of all the twelve who finally drew closest together. The day of Pentecost wrought a great change upon them both, and by doing so linked them in still closer bonds. The grace was given them which enabled each to struggle successfully with his own original defects, and to find in the other that which he most wanted. It is truly singular, in reading the earlier chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, to notice how close the coalition between Peter and John became. Peter and John go up together to the temple. It is upon Peter and John that the lame man at the gate fixes his eye. After he was healed, it is said that he held Peter and John as if they were inseparable. It was when they saw the boldness of Peter and John that the members of the Sanhedrim marvelled. And when they commanded them to speak no more in the name of Jesus, it is said that "Peter and John answered and said," as if in



very voice as well as in action they were one. Acts 3:1, 3, 11; 4:13, 19.

Blessed fruit this of that all-conquering grace of God, which lifts Peter above the fear of reproach, and John above the love of ease; which brings the most timid and retiring of the twelve to the side of the most stirring, the most impetuous; supplying a stimulus to the one—a regulator to the other; bringing them into a union so near, and to both so beneficial—John's gentleness leaning upon Peter's strength; Peter's fervid zeal chastened by John's pure, calm love. In the glorious company of the apostles, they shone together as a double star, in whose complemental light, love and zeal, labor and rest, action and contemplation, the working servant and the waiting virgin, are brought into beautiful harmony.

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## VIII.

### THE GREAT COMMISSION.\*

THE very fact that among those who saw Christ upon the mountain side of Galilee there were some who doubted, convinces us that more than the eleven must have been present at the interview. For after his repeated appearances to them in Jerusalem, after his meeting with them, and eating with them, and showing them his hands and his side, and asking them to handle him—that any of the eleven should at this after stage have doubted, is scarcely credible. And our impression of the incredibility of this is deepened by reflecting that it was to a place of his own appointment they now went, and that for the very purpose of seeing and conversing with him once more. There are other and still weightier reasons, which leave no ground for doubt, that the appearance of the risen Saviour recorded by St. Matthew—the only one which this evangelist does record, and to which we may therefore conclude that a peculiar importance attached—was the same with that to which St. Paul refers, when he says: “After that he was seen of five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.”

It was the will of Christ to show himself alone after his resurrection, once, and once only, to the whole collective body of his disciples; to as many, at least, as could conveniently be congregated at

\* Matt. 28:16–20.

one time, and in one place. It was in Galilee that this purpose could best be accomplished. There, and there only, could so many as five hundred of his disciples be found, and brought safely together. After the ascension, when all assembled at Jerusalem that the city and its neighborhood could supply, the number of them gathered there was only one hundred and twenty. Hence, perhaps, one reason why, on the night before his death, and on the morning of his resurrection, the apostles were so repeatedly and emphatically told by Christ himself, and through the commissioned angel, that he went before them into Galilee, and it was to be there that they were to see him. Their attention was thus fixed beforehand upon an interview at which the most public and impressive manifestation of their risen Lord was to be made.

The necessity of the case required that both time and place should be named beforehand, fixed by our Lord himself, by him communicated to the apostles, by them announced to others; the tidings conveyed abroad over Galilee, wherever disciples of Jesus were to be found. One can imagine what intense curiosity, what longing desire to be present at such an interview, would be kindled wherever the intelligence was carried. In due time the day appointed dawns. On towards the indicated mountain-side, group after group is eagerly pressing; the solitary one from some far-off hamlet, the one of his family that has been taken while the others were left, mingling with the larger companies that Capernaum and Bethsaida send forth. All are gathered now. From knot to knot of old Galilean friends the apostles pass, assuring them that this is indeed the day and the place the Lord himself had named; and giving a still quicker edge to the already keen enough curiosity, by telling of the strange things they had so lately seen and heard at Jerusalem.

What new thoughts about the Crucified would be stirring then in many a breast! A prophet, all of them had taken him to be; but if all be true that they now are hearing, he must be more than a prophet; for which one of all their prophets ever burst the barriers of the grave? The Messiah, many of them had taken him to be; but now, if they are to retain that faith, their former notions of who and what the Messiah was to be, must be greatly changed. A Messiah reaching his throne through suffering and death, is an idea quite new to them. They ask about his late appearances, and are lost in wonder as they hear how few they have been, how short; at what a distance, even from the eleven, the risen Jesus had kept; what a studied reserve there had been in his intercourse with them, so different from his old familiarity. He is, he must be, a Being other, far higher,

than they had fancied him to be. Is it really true what they had heard himself say, but had not fully understood, that he was the Son of, the equal of the Father—God incarnate? Thomas tells them that he fully believes so. The other apostles tell them that he has opened their minds through a new interpretation of the prophecies to quite different notions about himself and his kingdom from anything they had hitherto entertained. In what a very singular condition of thought and feeling, as they try to realize it, must that company of five hundred brethren have been, which collected on the mountain-side, and stood awaiting Christ's coming?

At last the Lord appears: we know not how; whether bursting at once on their astonished vision, without shadow of approaching form or sound of advancing footstep, seen standing in the midst; or whether seen at first far off, alone in the distance, silently watched, as treading the mountain-side he drew nearer and nearer to them, till at last he was by their side. However he came, when they saw him, we are told they worshipped: with clasped hands, or on bended knee; some, like Thomas, with profound and intelligent adoration; others with a worship heightened by wonder, somewhat vague, but pure as the mountain air they breathed. But some doubted—those who saw him now for the first time after his resurrection. Here, as in almost every first interview of the kind, there was a doubt, one speedily dispelled, whose natural source we have already attempted to indicate.

“And Jesus came and spake to them, saying, All power is given to me in heaven and in earth.” To whatever height of conception and belief the men of that company may have been rising, upon whose ears these words fell, as Christ's greeting to them in the first, the only interview they were to have with him after his resurrection, we may be assured that they went much beyond what they ever expected to hear coming from those lips. Already they had worshipped, gazing in wonder on him, as one who had come to them from the dead. But what fresh subject for wonder now; what higher reason for worship now! Power they knew him to possess; power over earth, and air, and water; power over the spirits of all flesh; power even over the powers of darkness. Power enough they had attributed to him to set up an earthly kingdom in front of all opposition, to crush all his enemies under his feet. Such power they were prepared to hear him claim, and see him exercise. But they were not prepared to hear him say, “All power is given to me in heaven and in earth.” Far above all their former thoughts of him does Jesus thus ascend, and, by ascending, try to lead them up. It has been

already suggested, that one part of Christ's design in dwelling for these forty days on earth, and in the mode of conduct to his disciples which he pursued, was gradually to lift their minds from lower and unworthier thoughts of him to a true conception of his divine dignity and power; and it confirms our belief in this to find that in the greatest, the most public, the most solemn manifestation of himself which Christ at that time made, his first declaration to the assembled five hundred was, "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth!"

When first uttered, how many eyes were fixed in wonder upon the man who spake these words! Eighteen hundred years have gone past since then; millions upon millions of the human family have had these words repeated to them, as spoken by the Son of Mary; have regarded them as honestly and truly spoken; as expressing but a simple fact. How could this have been? How could a man of woman born, who had lived and died as we do, have been regarded as other than the vainest, most arrogant of pretenders, who said that all power in heaven and in earth was his, had there not been something in the whole earthly history of this man which corresponded with and bore out such an extraordinary assumption? And even such were the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. They have now been for centuries before the world, as the life and death of one who claimed to be the eternal Son of God, the equal of the Father; of one who said that as the Father knew him, so knew he the Father; of one who said that whatsoever things the Father did, the same did the Son likewise; that the Father had delivered all things into his hand; that all power was his in heaven and in earth. And no one has ever been able to show anything in the character, the sayings, the doings of Jesus Christ, inconsistent with such extraordinary pretensions; all is in harmony with the claim, all goes to sanction and sustain it. It seems to us that the simple fact that there was a Man who lived for three-and-thirty years in familiar intercourse with his fellow-men, who yet, before he left this world, was recognized and worshipped by five hundred of his fellow-men as one who was guilty of no presumption in saying, "All power is given me in heaven and in earth;" and who, since that time, has been believed in by such multitudes as the God incarnate, goes far, of itself, to sustain the belief that he was indeed the Son of the Highest, and that it was no robbery with him to count himself equal with God; for, only imagine that he was no more than he seemed to be, a Jew, the son of a Galilean carpenter, educated in a village in the rudest part of Judea—that such a man, being a man and no more, could have lived so long



upon the earth without saying or 'doing anything which could belie the idea that in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, appears to us to present far greater difficulties to faith than does the doctrine of the Incarnation.

It is not so much, however, as one possessed of it by original and native right, that Jesus lays claim here to supreme and unlimited power. He speaks of the "all power in heaven and in earth" as "given"—given by another; by Him whose law he had so magnified, whose character he had so glorified in his life and by his death. It was as the fruit and reward of his obedience unto death that he was invested by the Father with unlimited authority and power. One of the conditions of the everlasting Covenant was that, crucified in weakness, Christ should be raised in power; that, on account of his having suffered unto death, he should be crowned with glory and honor. And his first word to this company on the mountain-side is the first announcement from his own lips, that, his great decease having been accomplished, this condition of the covenant had been fulfilled; that he had entered upon possession of the mediatorial sovereignty. Constituted heir of all things, the great inheritance had to be acquired, the kingdom won. The heir still lingers for a season upon earth, but he is on his way to the throne on which he is to sit down, covered with glory and honor, angels and principalities and powers being made subject to him. Jesus indeed speaks here as if he were already upon that throne. As in the upper chamber, when the agony of the garden and the sufferings of the cross still lay before him, he spake as if the passion were over, as if heaven had been already entered, saying, "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am;" so here, on the mountain-side, he speaks as if the cloud had already carried him away—as if his feet were already standing within the throne of universal sovereignty—as if, having raised him by his mighty power from the dead, the Father had already set him on his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; had put all things under his feet, and given him to be Head over all to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

It is from the lofty elevation thus attained, it is as clothed with the supreme, limitless authority and power thus acquired, that Jesus issues the great commission to the church, Go ye therefore and teach or make disciples of all nations; or as you have it in another evangelist,

Go, preach the gospel to every creature. A mission so comprehensive was as novel as it was sublime. Familiarity with the idea blunts the edge of our wonder, but let us recollect that at the time when, in a remote Jewish province, gathering a few hundred followers around him, Jesus sent them forth, assigning to them a task which should not be accomplished till every creature had heard the glad tidings of salvation in his name, and all nations had been brought to sit under his shadow—that at that time the very idea of a religion equally addressed to, and equally adapted to all nations, equally needed by, and equally suited to every child of Adam, was wholly new, had never been broached, never been attempted to be realized. There was no form or system of idolatry that ever aimed at, or was indeed capable of such universality of embrace. The object of its worship was either confined to certain definite localities; the gods of certain mountains, groves, or streams, whose worship was incapable of transfer; or they were the offspring and expression of some peculiar state of society, whether savage or civilized, suited only to that particular state or condition of humanity in which they had their birth and being. It is true that in all the more educated nations of antiquity, there were men who soared far above the vulgar prejudices and superstitions of their times, whose religion, such as it was, had certainly nothing about it of that confinement by which the popular belief and worship were characterized, but if free thus from one kind of confinement, their religion was all the more liable to another. Unfitted for the many, it was by eminence the religion of the few. Its disciples gloried in its exclusiveness. It would have lost half its charm in their eyes, had the people at large adopted it. But there was no danger of that. It was essentially unfitted for the multitude. Its votaries would have laughed at the idea of trying to convert even a single village to their faith. Such, in the days of Jesus Christ, in all heathen countries, were the multiform idolatries of the many, the exclusive faith of the few. In Judea, it was somewhat different. Sacred books were circulating there, in which, under dark prophetic symbols, hints were given of a future gathering of all the nations under one great king and head. But these hints were universally misunderstood and misapplied. Amid all the confined and exclusive religions of that period, there was not one more confined, or more exclusive, than Judaism. Both socially and religiously, the Jew of the Saviour's time was one of the most shut up and bigoted of the race. Everything about him—his dress, his food, his domestic customs, his religious ceremonies—marked him off by a broad wall of separation from the rest of the species. He gloried in this distinc-

tion.—He thought and spoke of himself and his brethren as the elect of God, the holy, the clean : the Gentiles were the dogs, the polluted, the unclean. His attachment to his religion, as a faith proclaimed exclusively to his forefathers, and bequeathed by them as a national heritage to their children, was intense. His faith and his patriotism were one, and the deeper the patriotism the narrower the faith. And yet it is among this people ; it is from one who was brought up in one of its wildest districts ; it is from one for whom birth, position, education, had done nothing in the way of weaning him from the common prejudices of his countrymen, making him in that respect different from any other Jew ; it is from one who, save occasional visits to Jerusalem, never moved beyond the neighborhood of a Galilean village, nor shared in the benefits of any other society than it supplied ; it is from him that a religion emanates whose professed object is to gather into one, within its all-embracing arms, the whole human family. The very broaching of a project so original, so comprehensive, so sublime, at that time and in those circumstances, stands out as an event unique in the history of our race. In vain shall we try to explain it on the supposition that it was the self-suggested scheme of the son of a Galilean tradesman. The very time and manner of its earthly birth claims for it a heavenly origin. Had Jesus Christ done nothing more than this—set the idea for the first time afloat, that it was desirable and practicable to frame for the world a religious faith and worship which should have nothing of the confinements of country, or period, or caste, but be alike adapted to all countries, all periods, all kinds and classes of men—he would have stood by himself and above all others.

But he did more than this. He not only announced the project, but he devised the instrument by which it was to be accomplished ; he put that instrument in its complete and perfect form into the hands of those by whom it was to be employed. Study the history of all other revolutions, civil or religious, which have taken place upon this earth, and you will find it to be true of all of them, that the methods by which they were wrought out were at first devised by different men and at lengthened intervals, and afterwards perfected by slow degrees. The men engaged in effecting them had to feel their way forward ; had often to retrace their steps ; had often to cast aside an old instrument because it was found to be useless, or because a new and better one had been fallen upon in its stead. It has not been so with the establishment and propagation upon the earth of the religion of Jesus Christ. The instrumentality employed here has been the same from the beginning. It has never asked for, be-

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cause it never needed, improvement or change. We have it now in our hands in the same form in which it was put by Christ himself into the hands of the first disciples of the faith. The experience of so many centuries has detected no flaw, revealed no weakness, provided no substitute. When Jesus said, Go, make disciples of all nations, he announced—and that in the simplest, least ostentatious way, as if there were no novelty in the project, no difficulty in its execution, as if it were the most natural thing in the world that it should be taken up, as if it were the surest thing that it could be carried out—he announced the most original, the broadest, the sublimest enterprise that ever human hands have been called upon to accomplish. And when he said, Go, preach the gospel to every creature, he supplied, in its complete and perfect form, the instrument by which it was to be realized. And that simple gospel of the grace of God preached, proclaimed, made known among all nations, to every creature, has it not proved itself fitted for the work? No nation can claim this gospel as peculiarly its own. No class or kind of human beings can appropriate it to themselves. It speaks with the same voice, it addresses the same message to the wandering savage and to the civilized citizen, to the most abandoned reprobate and to the most correct and fastidious moralist. Its immediate and direct appeal is to the naked human conscience, to man as a sinner before his Maker. Wholly overlooking and ignoring all other distinctions of character and condition, it regards us all as on the common level of condemnation, under the sentence of that law which is holy and just and good. To each of us, as righteously condemned, it offers a free, full pardon through the death, an immediate and entire acceptance through the merits and mediation, of Jesus Christ. It presents the means and influences by which a holy character and life may be attained on earth, and it opens up the way to a blissful immortality hereafter. If, looking simply at the outward means employed, we were asked wherein lay the secret of the immediate and immense power which the Christian religion at first exerted upon such multitudes of men, we should say that it was in the call it carried with it to every man, just as it found him, to repent, and repenting, enter into immediate peace with his Maker through Jesus Christ; in the assurance that it gave of God's perfect good-will to him, His perfect readiness to forgive and accept; the proclamation which it made that, by Christ's death, every let or hinderance had been removed, and that every sinful child of Adam was invited to enter into that rest which Christ had provided for all who came to him. — Only think, when these tidings were new, and when they were at once heartily and cordially believed



in, what a wonderful revolution in man's inner being they were fitted to effect! Can you wonder when, to a world grown weary of its follies, its idolatries, its philosophies, its gropings in the dark, its struggles to find the truth, its passionate desire to know something of that world beyond the grave, for the first time it was told that God was not a God afar off but very near at hand, for he had sent his own Son into the world to make such a revelation of him that it could be said that whosoever had seen him had seen the Father also; it was told that a life beyond the grave was no longer a matter of speculation, for Christ, the Son of the Eternal, had risen as the first-fruits of a coming general resurrection of the dead; it was told that access to God and to God's full favor was no longer a thing of doubt and time and difficulty, to be reached, if reached at all, through prayer and priests, and services and sacrifices, for a new and direct and open way had been revealed by God himself, through which any one might step at once into his gracious presence, into the full light of his reconciled countenance; it was told that the forgiveness of all his past sin was no longer a matter about which, to the last moment of his life, a man was to be kept hanging between hope and fear, for through this man Christ Jesus there was offered to all who would accept it an instant remission of all their sins; it was told that poor, weak, tempted, erring, sinful, suffering man had no longer to regard himself as an alien, an exile from the world of the pure and the blessed, frowned on by the beings or powers he worshipped, his whole life turned into a struggle by one or other kind of propitiatory offerings to keep on something like good terms with his conscience and his God, for there was *One* who had loved and suffered and died to save him; a man like himself, and yet a God; a man to pity, a God to protect; a man to sympathize, a God to succor; whose presence, companionship, friendship, were waiting to cheer his path in life, and illumine for him the dark valley of the shadow of death; can you wonder that when, in all its simplicity and in all its fulness of comfort and consolation, the gospel of the grace of God was first proclaimed to sinful men, it was hailed by thousands as indeed glad tidings from the far country? Or, looking at the Scripture records, can you wonder that the three thousand who were converted on the day of Pentecost, as they broke bread from house to house did eat their meat with such gladness and singleness of heart, praising God? Can you wonder, when with one accord the people of Samaria gave heed to the things spoken by Philip, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, that there was great joy in that city? Can you wonder, when the Ethiopian treasurer had his eyes opened to see who it was who had been

wounded for his transgressions and bruised for his iniquities, and found in Jesus the very Saviour that he needed, that he went on his way rejoicing? Can you wonder, when at Antioch and elsewhere the Gentiles heard for the first time all the words of this life, that "they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord"? Many and great indeed were the hinderances which arose: slow often and difficult the progress that was made. But the way in which these hinderances generally acted, was to cloud with some obscurity the simple tidings of the love of God in Christ to sinful men; to close the door that his grace had opened; to fetter with this condition or with that, the full reconciliation with our Maker into which we are all invited at once to enter; more or less, in fact, to assimilate the religion of Jesus to all the other religions which have represented God's favor as a thing to be toiled for through life, and to be won, if won at all, only at its close—the life itself to be passed in a sustained uncertainty as to whether it would be got at last or not—whereas it is the distinction and the glory and the power of the gospel of the grace of God, that it holds out to us at the very first, as a gratuity, which it has cost Christ much to purchase, but which it costs us nothing to acquire—the forgiving, loving favor of the Most High. It asks us to dismiss here all our doubts and fears; to know and believe the love which God has to us; to see in Jesus one in whom we can undoubtingly confide, who is absolutely to be depended on, on whom it is impossible that too much confidence can be reposed; who by every way that love could devise, or the spirit of self-sacrifice achieve, has tried to get us to trust alone, unhesitatingly, habitually, for ever in him.

What is it—how often do we ask these hearts of ours—what is it which keeps us from welcoming such glad tidings? What is it which keeps these tidings from filling our hearts with a full and continued joy? What is it which keeps us from trusting one so entirely worthy of our confidence as Jesus Christ? Nothing whatever in the tidings; nothing in Him of whom the tidings speak.

Try if you can construct any form of words better fitted than those which meet you in the Bible, clearly and forcibly to express the idea that God is now in Jesus Christ most thoroughly prepared, is most entirely willing, to receive at once into his favor every repentant, returning child of Adam, and that there is not a single man anywhere, or upon any ground, shut out from coming and accepting this pardon—coming and entering into this peace. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. Come unto me, *all* ye that labor and are

heavy laden, and I will give you rest. God so loved the world, as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life. The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Any one—every one—all—whosoever; we know no other words which could more thoroughly take in all, excluding none. These, however, are but words. The great thing is to get fixed in the mind and heart that which these words point to and express; that the God whom we have offended approaches us in love, in Christ, assuring us of a gracious reception; the embrace of a Father's guiding, protecting arms, and the shelter hereafter of a Father's secure and blessed home.

"Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Our Lord's forerunner had adopted the practice of baptizing those who desired to be regarded as his followers. His baptism, however, was prefigurative and incomplete. It was simply a baptism unto repentance. It was a faith only in the kingdom as at hand that was required of those who submitted to it. But the kingdom had come. The day of Pentecost, on which it was to be visibly erected, was drawing near. Another higher and fuller baptism was now to be proclaimed, and thenceforward to be administered.

Baptizing into the name: not simply *in* the name, of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; *this* might mean no more than performing the rite in the name, that is, by the authority of God. The name of God, we know, is the term commonly employed in Scripture to indicate the character and the nature of the Supreme. When the expression meets us then—the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—we understand it as expressive of the one nature revealed to us in the three personalities of the Triune Jehovah. Now to be baptized into that name is to be taken up into, to be incorporated with him whose name is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The term is expressive or symbolic, not of a mere outward and formal acknowledgment or confession of our faith in the Divinity, as he has been pleased to reveal himself to us under that mysterious distinction of a threefold personality; but of an inward and spiritual union, communion, fellowship, with the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost. The Israelites were all baptized unto Moses, and, as so baptized, were taken up into, and incorporated with, that spiritual community of which the Mosaic was an external type. They did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink; derived all their strength and refreshment from the same spiritual sources. And



even so are all baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, emblematic of that oneness with each and all of the three persons of the Trinity, which the Saviour had in his eye when he prayed for his own: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." And that same oneness through Christ with the Father and the Holy Ghost, is it not equally if not still more distinctly and impressively held out to our view in the sacrament of the Supper? "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion, or common participation, of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion, or common participation, of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." Closest, loftiest, most blessed of all fellowships, that to which in Jesus Christ we are elevated, and of which our participation of the two sacraments of the church is the external sign.

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." The crowning glory of the gospel—of its proclamation of a free and full justification before God, alone through the merits of the Saviour—is this, that it opens the way and supplies the motive to a right and dutiful discharge of all commanded duty. Enthroning Christ in the heart, planting deep within it, as its strongest and most constraining motive, a supreme love to him, it produces an obedience which springs not from fear, but from love. "If ye love me," said Jesus to his disciples, "keep my commandments." He did not question or suspect the reality of their love. He knew there was a kind of love they all had to him. But that affection, tender as it was, might not be strong; regarding him mainly in the character of a companion or friend, it might fail to recognize him in the character of their Master, their Lord. 'If ye indeed love me, then,' says Jesus to them and to us, 'let not love die out in the mere feeling of attachment to my person; let it find its becoming and appropriate expression in the keeping of my commandments; so shall it be preserved from evaporating in the emotion of the hour; so shall it be consolidated into a fixed, a strong, a permanent principle of action.' All love, even that of equal to equal, if unexpressed, if unembodied, has a strong tendency to decline; but if it be love of a dependent to a superior, of a servant to a master, the love which does not clothe itself in obedience, becomes spurious as well as weak. A bare acknowledgment in words, or in some formal act of bare profession of the fatherly or masterly relationship—what is it worth if the authority of the father be disregarded, the orders of the master be disobeyed? If we fail to regard Christ as the Lord of the conscience,



the lawgiver of the life; if our obligations to be all and do all he has commanded be unfelt; if the love we cherish to him go not forth into action—such barren and unfruitful affection will not be recognized by him, who hath not only said, “If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments,” but also, “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.” On the other hand, if our love to Christ, however faint and feeble it be at the first, has not only an eye to see him and admire his beauty, but an ear to hear him and obey his word; if under the strong conviction that to offer love without service to such a Saviour as Jesus is, would be but another variety of that mockery to which he was subjected in the judgment-hall of Pilate; if the sincere and honest effort be put forth to obey the precepts he has given for the regulation of our heart and life—then shall each fresh effort of that kind, however short it fall of its destined aim, exert the happiest influence upon the love from which it springs, quickening, expanding, elevating, intensifying it. Each new attempt to do his will shall reveal something more of the loveableness of the Redeemer’s character. The loving and the doing shall help each other on, till the loving shall make the doing light; and by the doing shall the loving be itself made perfect.

And one marked peculiarity of the obedience thus realized shall be this, that all things whatsoever Christ hath commanded will be attempted, at least, if not discharged. “Ye are my friends,” said Jesus, “if ye do whatsoever I command you;” a test of friendship very sad and hopeless in the application of it, were it meant that whatsoever Christ has commanded must be done, up to the full measure and extent of his requirement, before we could be reckoned as his friends. Then were that friendship put altogether beyond our reach. A test, however, both true and capable of immediate and universal application, if we regard it as meaning that it is by the universality of its embrace, and not by its perfection in any one individual instance, that the obedience of the Christian is characterized; that there shall not be one command which is freely, wilfully, and habitually violated; not one known duty which is not habitually tried to be discharged. As ever then we hope to be acknowledged as his friends, his true and faithful followers, let us esteem every precept he hath given concerning everything to be right; and let us give ourselves to the unreserved, unrestricted doing of his will. Matt. 5:21, 27.

“Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Jesus had spoken much to his disciples about his departure from them, about his leaving them alone. “I go my way,” he had said to them in the upper chamber, “and none of you asketh, Whither goest

thou? A little while and ye shall not see me, and again a little while and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. And ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." It was in such an affectionate, sympathizing way that Jesus sought beforehand to prepare the minds and hearts of his disciples for the shock of his death, the sorrow of his departure. For a little while they did not see him; he was lost in the darkness of the sepulchre. Again, for a little while, they did see him, on those few occasions when he made himself visible to them after his resurrection. Even, however, on one of the earliest of these appearances, he seemed at pains to remove the idea from his disciples' minds that he had returned in order to abide. "Touch me not," was his language to Mary, "for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." It was as one on his way to the Father, tarrying but a little while on the earth, that he desired during the forty days to be recognized. But now, when in this great interview on the mountain-side, he manifests forth his glory, takes to himself his great power, announces the universal sovereignty which had been put into his hands as the Mediator, issues the great commission upon which, in all ages, his followers were to act, he closes by speaking, not of his approaching departure, but of his continued, his abiding presence: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The Omnipotent reveals himself thus as the Omnipresent also: 'Go ye into all nations, go to the farthest corner of the habitable globe, but know that, go where you will, my presence goeth with you. Labor on, generation after generation, but know that the time shall never come when I shall leave you or forsake you. My bodily presence I remove; with the eye of sense you soon shall see me no more; but my spiritual presence shall never be withdrawn; it shall abide with you continually, even to the end of the world, till I come again, till that time arrive when it shall no longer be said that I will come to you to live with you—when I shall come to take you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also.'

The richest legacy he could have left to it is this promise of his abiding presence with the church. Looking at the church generally, at the church in any one country or in any one city, any one section of the church—we may often wonder and be afraid as we contemplate the difficulties she has to contend with in going forth to execute the great errand upon which she has been sent. This is the light, how-

ever, in all the darkness. All power has been given to Christ in heaven and earth; he has been constituted Head over all things for the church. This headship over all the principalities and powers of darkness, this power over all things in heaven and earth, shall he not employ in helping onward the great movement which is to give him the heathen for his inheritance, the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession?

It is not indeed by bare might and power that this great conquest of the world is to be won. When Jesus says, "All power is given unto me in heaven and earth," he does not add, Go ye therefore, and by the employment of so much of that power as I may please to communicate, subdue all mine enemies, uproot all rival thrones, set up and extend thy kingdom. No; but, Go teach and preach, instruct, persuade; the conversion of the world to me must be a thing of willingness, and not of compulsion. They must be taught; for how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed, and how shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach except they be sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" But not only must they be taught, the people must be made willing in the day of the Lord's power—a power which shall work on them, not from without but from within, drawing them to himself. But how shall that power be brought into full and living operation? It comes, it works according to our faith, in answer to our prayers; it comes through the realizing of the presence of the Saviour; the pleading for the promise of the Spirit to be fulfilled. Do we ask ourselves why it is that so many hundred years have rolled away since these words were spoken in Galilee; since the world was given by him into the hands of his followers, to go out upon it and reclaim it unto God, and yet so little progress has been made towards the great consummation; not half the globe yet even nominally won? The answer is at hand: Our lack of faith; our lack of prayer; our lack of efforts undertaken in the name, and prosecuted in the promised strength of the Redeemer.

But this great parting promise of our Lord is to be taken by us as addressed not merely to the church at large in her collective capacity, or as engaged in her public work of propagating the truth as it is in Jesus. It is to be taken as addressed to every individual Christian. "Behold," says Jesus, "I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." "If a man love me, he will



keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." I will come; I and my Father will come. We will come. Was ever such a plural used as that! Who is he who associates himself in this way with the omnipresent and omnipotent Jehovah, who engages for the Father, and what he engages for the Father undertakes equally himself? We will come to him, not to pay a transient visit, not as the wayfaring man who turns aside to tarry but for a night. We will take up our abode with him. To have these words of Jesus realized in our daily, hourly life, to know and believe that he is indeed with us, beside us, has come to us, has taken up his abode with us, this is our comfort and our strength. Nothing short of this will do. No general belief in all that Jesus was and did and suffered here on earth, no belief in anything about him, nothing but himself in living, loving presence, seen and felt by us, as a presence as real as that of the closest companionship of life; as real, but a thousand times closer, a thousand times more precious.

How well he knows this who has said and done so much to encourage his people in all ages to realize his presence with them in all the stages of their earthly life! A famine drives Isaac from Judea. He halts at Gerar, meditating a still farther flight. The Lord appears to him and says, "Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of. Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee and bless thee." Let the patriarch but know and feel that the Lord is with him, and no fear shall drive him from the place which that God hath appointed as his habitation. Sleeping Jacob lies with his head upon the stony pillow; the vision comes to him by night; the Lord speaks to him from the top of the mystic ladder: "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land, for I will not leave thee till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Let Jacob but carry a sense of that presence along with him, and his solitary path and his fears of exile shall be lightened, and that future, so dark to him as he fled from his father's presence, shall be turned into light. It was a heavy task for hands like Joshua's to undertake to be successor to such a man as Moses. When that great leader of the people died, how destitute and helpless must Joshua have felt! What a crowd of difficulties must have risen up before his mind, as standing in the way of the invasion and the conquest of Canaan! But all his discouragements were met by that word of Jehovah: "Be strong and of a good courage; as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee; I will not fail thee nor forsake thee.



There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life." Solomon had almost as difficult a succession to fill as Joshua. It was no easy duty to take David's place, and to carry out his great design. But there was a way in which he might have been strengthened for the task. "If," said the Lord to him, "thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, *I will be with thee*, and build thee a sure house." And still, whatever be the peculiarities of our lot in life, the nature of the duties we have to discharge, the difficulties to contend with, the trials to bear, the temptations to meet, still it is the fulfilment of that most gracious promise, *I will be with thee*, which alone can bear us up, and bear us through. Let us rest more simply and entirely on it, trying, as we advance in life, to have more and more of the spirit of the Psalmist, as he looked out upon the future and said, "I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

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## IX.

### THE ASCENSION.\*

THERE are ten appearances of our Saviour after his resurrection recorded in the New Testament. So many as five of them occurred on the day of the resurrection: those, namely, to Mary Magdalene, to the Galilean women, to Peter, to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, to the ten apostles and others assembled in the evening within the upper chamber. The sixth appearance was to the eleven and the rest on the evening of the seventh day from that on which he rose from the dead. The seventh—spoken of by John as the *third* time that he showed himself, inasmuch as it was the third occasion upon which he had met with them collectively, or in any considerable number together—was to the seven disciples by the sea of Tiberias. The eighth was the great manifestation on the mountain side of Galilee. The ninth, of which we should have known nothing but for the simple record of it preserved in the fifteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, was to James the brother of the Lord; and finally, the tenth, on the occasion of the ascension. There may have been other unrecorded appearances of our Lord. It is nowhere said in the gospels or epistles that there were none else besides the ones related therein. But the nature of

\* Luke 24:44-53; Acts 1:3-8.



THE ASCENSION TO HEAVEN

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the case, and the manner of the narrative, force upon us the belief that if there were any such, they must have partaken of the character of the manifestation to James; having a private and personal, rather than a public object in view. But why, if his interviews with his followers were so few, his intercourse with them so brief, so broken, so reserved, did Jesus remain on earth so long? Why were so many as forty days of an existence such as his spent by him in this way? It may seem useless even to put a question to which no satisfactory answer can be given, inasmuch as, beyond the mere statement that he afforded thereby many infallible proofs of his resurrection, nothing explicit is said in the Scriptures as to the particular object or design of this lingering of our Lord so long upon the earth. And yet it is scarcely possible for us to forget, or to fail in being struck by it, that this period of forty days was one which had already been signalized in the history of redemption; and looking at the other instances in which it meets our eye in the Scripture narrative, we are tempted to put the question, Was it as Moses was withdrawn from men, to spend these forty days in fasting and prayer on the mount with God, as the fit and solemn preparation for the promulgation of the law through his hands at Sinai? Was it as Elijah was carried away into the wilderness, to fast and pray there for forty days, to prepare him for his great work as the restorer of the law in Israel? Was it as Jesus himself, after his baptism, was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, to fast there forty days, and at the end to be tempted of the devil, to fit him for that earthly ministry which was to close in his death upon the cross? Was it even so that now, for another forty days, our Lord was detained on earth, as the suitable preface or prelude to his entrance upon that higher stage of the mediatorial work in which he is to sit upon the throne, henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool?

Passing, however, from a topic which must remain shrouded in obscurity, let us take up the incidents of our Lord's parting interview with his apostles. They have returned from Galilee, and are now once more at Jerusalem. There might have been some specific instructions to that effect delivered in private to themselves, or communicated to them through James, which brought the disciples back from Galilee to Jerusalem. But we do not need to suppose that it was so, in order to account for the movement; for let us remember that this period of forty days was immediately preceded by the great festival of the Passover, and followed by that of Pentecost, both of which required the presence of the apostles at Jerusalem. It was not till the first of them was over that they could well leave the Holy



City, and so you find them remaining there for a week after the resurrection. And now the promised and appointed meeting in Galilee having taken place, the approach of the second festival naturally invited their return. However it came about, the fortieth day after the resurrection saw the eleven and their companions once more assembled at Jerusalem. Christ's former meetings with them there collectively had been in the evening, in the closed chamber, where they had assembled in secret for fear of the Jews. This last one, though we know not when or how it commenced, may have begun in the same upper chamber already hallowed by the former meetings, but it was obviously at an earlier hour, and took place in the broad daylight. The first, or earlier part of it—that spent within the city—appears to have been devoted to the renewal and expansion of such instructions as he had delivered to the two disciples on their journey to Emmaus. We gather this from the forty-fourth to the forty-seventh verses of the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Luke's gospel. It is very natural to read these verses in immediate connection with those which go before, and to regard them simply as a continuation of the narrative of what occurred at that meeting on the evening of the resurrection day. And so indeed, in common with the majority of readers, we were at first disposed to regard them. By reading on to the end of the chapter, however, you will at once perceive that the narrator, without any note or mark of time, has condensed into one short and continuous statement all that he had then to say about the period between the resurrection and the ascension; omitting so entirely all mention of any after day or after meetings, that if you had had nothing but this last chapter of Luke to guide you, you might have imagined—indeed, could not well have thought anything else—that the ascension had taken place on the very evening of the resurrection day. The same narrative, however, Luke has, in the first chapter of the Acts, filled up, and broken down into its parts the brief and summary notice with which he had closed his gospel. And it is when we compare what he says in the one writing with what he says in the other, that we become persuaded that the verses from the forty-fourth downward of the last chapter in his gospel belongs to and describes, not what happened in the evening interview on the day of the resurrection, but what happened in the last interview of all on the day of the ascension; for you will notice as common to the two accounts, the peremptory injunction laid upon the apostles, that they were not to leave Jerusalem till the promise of the Father had been fulfilled, and the baptism of the Spirit had been

conferred. Such an injunction would not have been proper to the occasion of the first interview in the upper chamber. They were to leave Jerusalem, and in point of fact did leave it, after that meeting, to see the Lord in Galilee. According, however, to the account contained in the Acts of the Apostles, it was after the command had been given that they should not depart from Jerusalem that Jesus spake to them of their being witnesses unto him in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth; an announcement which corresponds with that contained in the forty-seventh and forty-eighth verses of the chapter in the gospel, leading us naturally to conclude that these verses relate to the final meeting on the ascension day. We must make a break somewhere in the chapter of the gospel; and it seems, on the whole, much more natural and consistent to make it at the end of the forty-third than at the forty-eighth verse.

Adopting, then, this idea, we have the fact before us that, in the first instance, when he met with the eleven in the course of that day on which he was taken up into heaven, our Saviour occupied himself with showing them how needful it was that all things that had been written in the law of Moses and in the Prophets and in the Psalms regarding him should be fulfilled; with showing them how exactly many of their ancient prophecies had met with their fulfilment in the manner and circumstances of his death; with showing them how it behooved him to suffer, and through suffering to reach the throne of that kingdom which he came to set up on the earth; at once unfolding to them the Scriptures, and opening their minds to understand them. As on the first, so now on the last day of his being with them, this was the chosen theme on which he dwelt; this the lesson upon which a larger amount of pains and care was bestowed by our Lord after his resurrection than upon any other. What weight and worth does this attach to these Old Testament testimonies to his Messiahship! what a sanction does it lend to our searching of their prophetic records, in the belief that we shall find much there pointing, in prophecy and type and figure, to the Lamb slain before the foundation of the earth, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.

Our Lord's exposition of these Scriptures could not have been wholly in vain. The veil which had been upon the hearts of his apostles in their former reading of the prophecies must have been at least partially removed. Their notions of a Messiah coming only to conquer, only to restore and establish and extend the old Jewish theocracy, must have been materially altered and rectified. When, then, after all these expositions of their Master—after all the fresh light he

had thrown upon the true nature of his kingdom and the manner of its establishment, you find them coming to him and saying, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" it could scarcely be that, ignoring all they had just heard, and clinging still to their first belief, they were inquiring about an immediate erection of a temporal and visible kingdom. Let us rather believe that, accepting all which Jesus had taught them, admitting now fully the idea of a suffering and dying Messiah, their conceptions altered and elevated at once as to the kind of kingdom he was to set up, and the way in which that kingdom was to be established and advanced—building upon these new foundations, their old spirit of curiosity found now a new object on which to fasten. They saw now the need there was that Jesus should have suffered all these things; but still there was a kingdom which, through these sufferings, he was to reach, a glory on which, when these were over, he was to enter. Still there lay within these prophecies, which their minds had now been opened to understand, many a wonderful announcement of the part which Israel was to take in the erection and consolidation of the Redeemer's empire upon this earth. So much had already been accomplished by their Lord and Master. He had been wounded for their transgressions, bruised for their iniquities; was he now to see of the travail of his soul; to divide the portion with the great, the spoil with the strong? Were nations that knew not him to run unto him; was he to be exalted as Governor among the nations; were all the ends of the earth to remember and turn unto the Lord, all the kindreds of the nations to worship before him; was his law to go forth of Zion, and his word from Jerusalem; and were the nations, as it had been predicted they should do in the latter days, the days of the Messiah's reign, to be heard saying, "Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob"? "Lord," they say to him, with some such thoughts floating vaguely through their minds, "wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Jesus, in answering that question, does not blame, does not rebuke; says nothing that would imply that they were radically wrong in the hopes which they were cherishing; that there was no such kingdom as that they were asking about. Nay, rather, does he not assume that the kingdom was to be restored to Israel; that the question was only one as to time; that it was here, in their too eager haste and impatience, that the error of the disciples lay? "And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power;" a somewhat different declaration from that which Jesus made when, speaking of the time of his own



second advent, he said, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, not the angels of God," no, not even the Son in his character as the great prophet and revealer of the future to the church, but the Father only. But he does not say that he himself was ignorant of the times and the seasons. He only says that it was not for them, the disciples, to know them. They were among the secret things which the Father had reserved and kept within his own power, to reveal when and how and to whom he pleased. Would that these words of Jesus—among the last he ever uttered—had been sufficiently pondered by our prophetic interpreters in their prying into the unknown future which lies before us. Curiosity as to that future is not unnatural. There are so many things to make us desire to see things otherwise and better ordered than they now are. There lie too on the pages of prophecy so many things which remain yet to be accomplished, such bright and glorious visions of a coming period of triumph for the truth, a coming reign of peace and virtue and piety upon this earth, that we are not disposed to quarrel much with those whose eyes are turned longingly upon a future out of whose pregnant bosom such great and glorious things are to emerge. But we are most imperatively bound to keep our curiosity here under that check which the hand of the Redeemer himself has laid upon it, and to remember that he has told us of many things which are yet to come to pass, not that we might be able to predict them, to specify beforehand the dates of their arrival, but that when they do come to pass we might believe.

But if that kind of knowledge which they were seeking for was denied to the disciples, another and better thing was to be given them instead. They were to receive power from on high to execute that great mission upon which they were to be sent forth; that mission was to consist in their proclaiming everywhere repentance and remission of sins in the name of Jesus; and beginning at Jerusalem as the centre, they were to go forth, not as prophets of the future, but as witnesses of the past, witnesses for Christ, to carry the glad tidings abroad through all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. Three things are noticeable here:

1. The simplicity of the gospel message as originally promulgated by Christ himself. Repentance, a turning from all evil, a turning with true and penitent spirit to God; remission of sins, the covering of all past transgression by an act of grace on the part of God; the remission of sins, offered in the name of Jesus, coming only, but coming directly, immediately, fully, in and through the name of him who is the one all-prevalent Mediator between man and God; such was the



burden of that simple message which, in parting from them, Jesus committed to his disciples to make known over all the earth.

2. The wider and wider compass of that sphere over which this message was to be borne by them. Upon the universality of its embrace—its being a message for all mankind, for men of every age and country, character, and condition—we have already briefly commented; but let us not overlook here the fact as pointing to the true order in which all evangelistic labors should be prosecuted, that the apostles were to begin at Jerusalem, to go throughout all Judea, to penetrate Samaria with the glad tidings, and then to bear them on to the uttermost parts of the earth. Whatever else may have lain at the bottom of these instructions, this at least is apparent, that their own capital, their own country, their own kindred, their own immediate neighbors were first to have the tender made to them. Are we wrong in interpreting the direction of our Saviour as implying that all Christian effort should be from the centre to the circumference; should be so directed as to fill the inner circles first—the circles of our own heart, our own home, our own city, our own country; and that if, overlooking these, neglecting these, we busy ourselves among the broader, wider, outer circles, we are reversing the order and running counter to the directions of the Master whom we serve? I shall not venture here to say how much better I think it would be for ourselves and for others, for Christianity and for the world, if, instead of embarking in enterprises which fascinate by the wideness of their scope, but upon which, just because of that wideness, so much labor is wasted, each man were to cultivate the little sphere which lies more immediately around him.

3. We notice the qualification for Christian work, the baptism of the Holy Spirit bestowing the needed power. The apostles had a great commission given, a great task assigned; the wide world set forth as the field of their future labors. But they were not as yet prepared to execute this commission, to take up this work. They were to wait in Jerusalem; to wait some days; do nothing but wait and pray and hope; a good and useful lesson in itself, subduing, restraining the spirit of eager and impatient self-confidence—a lesson which is still in force; that pause, that period of inaction, those ten days of stillness between the day of the ascension and the day of Pentecost, as full of instruction still to us as of benefit originally to the disciples. And when the baptism of fire at last was given, the wanting element was supplied, said here by Christ himself to be *power*: “Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.” “Ye shall receive power after that the Holy

Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Not knowledge so much was wanted but power; a firmer grasp of truth already known; a stronger, deeper, steadier attachment to a Saviour already loved; conviction, affection ripened into abiding, controlling, enduring principle of action; power to be, to do, to suffer. Is not that the very thing which in religion we all most need; the very thing we feel we cannot ourselves attain; the very thing which it requires the baptism of a heavenly influence to bestow?

But let us follow Jesus to the mount called Olivet. His closing counsels given, he leads his disciples out of the city. Did they, in open day, pass along through the streets of Jerusalem? If they did, how many wondering eyes would rest upon the well-known group of Galilean fishermen; how many wondering eyes would fix upon the leader of that group—the Jesus of Nazareth, whom six weeks before they had seen hanging upon the cross at Calvary. Little heeding the looks which they attract, they pass through the city gate. They are now on a well-known track; they cross the Kedron; they approach Gethsemane. We lose sight of them amid the deep shadows of these olive-trees. Has Jesus paused for a moment to look, for the last time, with those human eyes of his, upon the sacred spot where he cast himself on the night of his great agony, upon the ground? Once more they emerge; they climb the hillside; they cross its summit; they are approaching Bethany. He stops; they gather round. He looks upon them; he lifts his hands; he begins to bless them. What love unutterable in that parting look; what untold riches in that blessing! His hands are uplifted; his lips are engaged in blessing, when slowly he begins to rise: earth has lost her power to keep; the waiting, up-drawing heavens claim him as their own.—An attraction stronger than our globe is on him, and declares its power. He rises; but still as he floats upward through the yielding air, his eyes are bent on these up-looking men; his arms are stretched over them in the attitude of benediction, his voice is heard dying away in blessings as he ascends. Awe-struck, in silence they follow him with straining eyeballs, as his body lessens to sight, in its retreat upward into that deep blue, till the commissioned cloud enfolds, cuts off all further vision, and closes the earthly and sensible communion between Jesus and his disciples. That cloudy chariot bore him away, till he was "received up into heaven, and sat down on the right hand of God."

How simple, yet how sublime, how pathetic this parting! No disturbance of the elements, no chariot of fire, no escort of angels;

nothing to disturb or distract the little company from whom he parts; nothing to the very last to break in upon that close and brotherly communion, which is continued as long as looking eye and listening ear can keep it up. But who shall tell us—when these earthly links were broken, and that cloud carried him to the farthest point in which cloud could form or float, and left him there—who shall tell us what happened above, beyond, on the way to the throne; in what new form of glory, by what swift flight, attended by what angel escort, accompanied by what burst of angelic praise, that throne of the universe was reached? Our straining eyes we too would turn upward to those heavens which received him, and wonder at the reception which awaited him there, till on our ears there falls that gentle rebuke, “Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?” ‘Think not with eyes like yours to pierce that cloud which hides the world of spirits from mental vision. Enough for you to know that this same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go.’

This mild rebuke was given to the men of Galilee upon the mountain top by two men in white apparel, who stood beside them, their presence unnoted till their words had broken the deep silence, and drawn upon themselves that gaze hitherto directed towards heaven; two angels, perhaps the two who watched by the empty sepulchre; one of them the same who in the hour of his great agony had been sent to strengthen the sinking Saviour in the garden, now stationed here at Olivet to soften, as it were, to the disciples the sorrow of this parting, to turn that sorrow into joy. But how at that moment, when they were discharging this kindly but humble office, were the heavenly host engaged? Surely, if at the emerging out of chaos of this beautiful and orderly creation, those sons of God chanted together the new world's birthday hymn; surely, if in that innumerable host above the plains of Bethlehem, a great multitude of them celebrated, in notes of triumph, a still better and more glorious birth—the entire company of the heavenly host must have struck their harps to the fullest, noblest, richest anthem that ever they gave forth, as the great Son of God, the Saviour of mankind—his earthly sorrows over, his victories over Satan, sin, and death complete—sat down that day with the Father on his throne, far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come.—Did these two angels who were left behind on earth, who had this humbler task assigned them, feel at all as if theirs were a lower, meaner service? No, they had too much of the spirit of Him who had for forty days kept that throne waiting to which he had now ascended, that he might tabernacle still a little longer with the



children of men. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

"Why gaze ye up into heaven? This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." 'This is not a final departure of this Jesus from the world he came to save. That was not the last look the earth was ever to get of him that you got of him as the clouds covered him from your view. He is to come again; to come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.' But for that, perhaps the disciples might have returned to Jerusalem with sad and downcast spirits, as those from whose head their Master had been for ever taken away. As it was, they returned, we are told, with great joy; the sorrow of the departure swallowed up in the hope of the speedy return. So vivid, indeed, was the expectation cherished by the first Christians of the second advent of the Lord, that it needed to be chastened and restrained. They required to have their hearts directed into a patient waiting for that coming. It is very different with us. We require to have that faith quickened and stimulated, which they needed to have chastened and restrained. It is more with wonder than with great joy that we return from witnessing the ascension of our Lord. But let us remember that though the heavens have received him, it is not to keep him there apart for ever from this world. He himself cherishes no such feeling of retirement and separation now that he has ascended up on high. I have spoken to you of his last words of blessing which fell audibly upon fleshly ears. But what are the very last words that in vision he uttered: "He that testifieth these things saith, Surely, I come quickly." Our crowned Saviour waits; with eager expectancy waits the coming of the day when his presence shall be again revealed among us. It may seem slow to us, that evolution of the ages which is preparing all things for his approach. But with him who says, "I come quickly," one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day; and as soon as the curtain shall drop on the last act of that great drama of which this earth is now the theatre, then, quick as love and power can carry him, shall the same Jesus be here again on earth—coming in like manner as these men of Galilee saw him go up to heaven. Are we waiting for that coming, longing for that coming, hastening to that coming? Are we ready, as he says to us, "Behold, I come quickly," to add as our response, "Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus!"

















